

DECAL - Bright from the Start**Meeting Minutes**

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**Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting
2/20/2014 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.

2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

a. *Approve agenda for 2/20/14 meeting

Kay Ford moved to accept the day's agenda. Janice Gallimore seconded. The agenda was unanimously accepted.

b. *Approve minutes from 11/21/13 board meeting

Dawnn Henderson moved to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2013, meeting of the board. Judy Neal seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Board Inspiration

Judy Neal shared a story about an inquisitive child who eventually brought his question all the way to the Georgia governor. She encouraged everyone to allow children to ask their questions.

4. Board Member Updates

Members of the board provided updates on their activities.

- Dawnn Henderson reported attending an employee chat with the Commissioner in December. She commented it was a very positive experience and noted that staff expressed desires for leadership training and improved internal communication. She was also reminded that courtesy counts.
- Jerri Kropp reported on an early childhood education conference held at Georgia Southern University in January at which the Commissioner was the keynote speaker.
- Victor Morgan reported attending an employee chat with the Commissioner in Rome.

5. Bright from the Start Presentations

a. Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Bobby Cagle presented updates on his activities. (See slides.) He introduced new staff member Kristin Bernhard as Deputy Commissioner for System Reform. He discussed three areas of focus for the agency: health and safety compliance, employee feedback, and stakeholder engagement.

He presented a summary of adverse actions taken to enforce health and safety rules, including enforcement fines, emergency closures, and license revocations and stated the agency hopes to see enforcement actions decrease as programs raise their compliance. He discussed the agency's efforts to gather employee input through surveys and face-to-face employee Chats with the Commissioner. The chats will expand to include employee face-to-face time with other senior leadership. Areas of strength voiced by employees included pride in the organization, approval of the agency's direction, and agency communications. Areas to improve included pay raises, high workloads and filling vacancies in the field, and alignment between divisions. Ideas are being developed to reduce the time between when a staff vacancy occurs in a field position and when it is filled.

The Commissioner also reiterated his commitment to stakeholder engagement; he believes it is more effective to understand the impact of potential changes on child care providers before making any changes. Last year, over 140 stakeholders participated in the department's stakeholder engagement networks.

Victor Morgan stated his approval of the agency's efforts to both enforce rules and offer rewards and incentives to providers.

b. Finance, Nutrition, & Legislative Update

Ray Higgins presented updates on the department's finances, nutrition programs, and legislation pertaining to the department. (See slides.) He gave an overview of department expenditures to date. He recognized Margie Landers and her finance team for another clean state audit—the department's 11th consecutive audit with no findings.

Mr. Higgins presented outreach strategies for the Summer Food Service Program. These include partnerships with the Georgia Food Bank Association, U.S.D.A. Rural Development, and the Governor's Grade Level Reading Campaign.

Mr. Higgins reported the department is monitoring two bills in the legislature as well as the state budget. House Bill 714 deals with unemployment insurance for seasonal employees and could impact child care industry staff such as Pre-K teachers. House Bill 789 would undo part of last year's legislation defining family day care homes and is opposed by the department in its current form; the department is in discussion with the bill's sponsor. In the state budget, the department is pleased to see merit-based pay raises currently included for agency staff and Pre-K teachers. One key budget item under consideration is to direct available resources to Pre-K assistant teacher salaries.

c. Programs Update

Keith Bostick presented updates on the department's emergency preparation efforts. (See slides.) The recent storm highlighted the need to develop an

agency-wide Emergency Preparation System. The agency will establish an emergency preparation committee and develop a business continuity plan.

d. Child Care Services Update

Kristie Lewis presented updates on Child Care Services (CCS). (See slides.) She showed a video from WALB 10 News in Albany that highlighted the importance of transportation rules. She presented the department's proposed amendments to transportation rules on which the board will vote later in the day. She stated the amendments are meant to clarify and simplify the rules without compromising children's health and safety. The amendments would also require two vehicle checks and clarify the timeframe for completing the second check. The department also proposes to add a transportation training requirement from state-approved trainers, to be embedded within the current required annual training hours. In addition, emergency medical information for children would need to be included on the vehicle. The amendments would also allow the department to simplify the forms used by child care providers to streamline documentation requirements and remove duplication.

Kay Ford suggested revising the "absent" indicator on the transportation form to include other reasons a child may no longer be present, such as parent pick-up. Ms. Lewis stated that would be a welcome addition. Ms. Ford also inquired into how training is delivered. Ms. Lewis stated that both community and online trainings are available. Georgia Thomas added the department has contacted over 500 state-approved trainers to prepare them for upcoming changes. Susan Harper stated she has attended trainings in her area and commented those trainings are widely available and are of high quality, although online training would also be welcome.

e. Legal Update

Ira Sudman presented updates on the Legal Unit. (See slides.) He presented summary statistics of completed criminal record checks following the new law coming into effect.

The average time to process an application, including pending applications, is 3.5 days. The rule applies to new employees in an existing child care facility and to all staff in new child care facilities.

Existing staff have three years to meet the requirement, but many current providers are meeting the requirement now. The Commissioner stated the department expects to have the process further streamlined by the end of the year.

f. Head Start Update

Janice Haker presented updates on Head Start and the Head Start State Collaboration Office. (See slides.)

She reported a decrease in the number of children funded in Head Start and Early Head Start due to federal sequestration. Congress will restore funding that was lost due to sequestration.

She presented on the Early Head Start/Child Care Partnership Grant, a new

grant proposal that is currently open for public comment; awards will be made by the end of December 2014 and will support an increase in access to services for children with high needs.

She also presented on an oral health study, the Head Start Annual Spring Conference, school readiness and parent engagement initiatives, and a home visiting conference in July sponsored by Great Start Georgia to support the state's development of home visiting competencies.

g. Break

h. Early Learning Challenge Grant

Kristin Bernhard presented updates on the Early Learning Challenge (ELC). (See slides.) She reported on the state's award of \$51.7 million through the ELC grant and its impact on the department's services for young children with high needs.

Georgia's application involves the collaboration of numerous state agencies and community organizations to complete 12 projects. She reviewed grant governance, with the department acting as lead agency. She presented an overview of the state's ELC projects including: grant management, Early Education Empowerment Zones, Quality Rated validation, Quality Rated access and availability, early learning and development standards, family engagement, home visitation, workforce knowledge and competencies, supporting early educators, comprehensive assessment, a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA), and unified data systems. Immediate steps include submitting scopes of work to the federal departments of Education and Health and Human Services, beginning project implementations, and coordinating plans and budgets with participating state agencies.

Tammy Lenkeit inquired about the department's biggest concern with the ELC implementation. Ms. Bernhard responded that one concern is how an unstable environment may impact project timelines. She explained the department is looking at lessons from implementation in states previously awarded the grant, with whom the department has good relations. Victor Morgan asked the department to expand on how it will use the ELC to support Quality Rated expansion. Ms. Bernhard responded projects include engagement with providers and revising the Quality Rated process to make it easier for providers to participate, as well as parent engagement and a project to adjust the CAPS child care subsidy copay to incentivize parents to choose Quality Rated providers. Carol Hartman added the department is looking at a cohort model to recruit providers as groups and is also building capacity in and engaging with home providers.

Kay Ford asked about the selection process for Early Education Empowerment Zones. Ms. Bernhard stated the department is currently developing guidelines for identifying them, guided by research and also by gauging community interest in the potential zones. The Commissioner reiterated the department's desire to use the grant funding effectively, including working with communities that are most interested in improving early care and learning. Susan Harper inquired how the board can engage community economic development agencies to support the ELC. Ms. Bernhard stated the Georgia Department of Economic Development is a partner in promoting the projects. The Commissioner stated efforts include identifying the economic incentives of high quality providers, both short term through creating jobs and long term through developing the

future workforce, and outreach to local economic development agencies is important to this goal. A commonality of failing child care programs is that they are typically in impoverished communities. The intent of the zones is to build on existing providers and attract new ones to increase quality in these areas and make quality accessible to low income families.

Dawn Henderson inquired into the development of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment noting that as a Pre-K parent, she was given assessment information but had to take it to her child's Kindergarten teacher personally. Ms. Bernhard responded this issue is not addressed through the KEA specifically but through the data system development. She added the Georgia Department of Education is in the process of revisiting its assessments, so there is a good opportunity to integrate the KEA within the child assessment system at this time. The Commissioner added in the last year the department has developed the data capacity to pass Pre-K assessment information to Kindergarten teachers; even so, children not in Pre-K or Head Start have no early learning assessment, and the KEA will address this at the beginning of the Kindergarten year.

Susan Harper requested a link to details on the Head Start program design. This will be sent following the board meeting.

6. Lunch & Committee Meetings

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

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

At 1 p.m. a public rules making hearing was held before the board. Public hearing officer Deborah Golymbieski called the hearing to order, explained the public hearing process, and opened the hearing for public comments. A summary of comments follows.

1. Carolyn Salvador, Georgia Child Care Association, stated the association supports removing unnecessary signature lines from transportation forms that result in citations, requiring two transportation checks by separate staff members, and the proposed transportation training model. She requested that the department's interpretation of the two hours required training be narrowed to apply only to staff members who conduct the transportation checks.
2. Paul Walker, Favorite Time Academy owner, Acworth, Ga., commented the transportation forms and rules create confusion. He stated the layout of the form focuses staff attention on filling out the form rather than watching children. He showed the form he designed that was approved by the department for his center's use and stated it was much easier to complete. He also commented that the terminology on the forms should be consistent. In addition, he presented a proposal for formatting child care rules to make them easier to read. He also commented that 15-passenger vans should be disallowed for use in child care settings. Handouts were distributed to board members.

Susan Harper made a motion to allow Mr. Walker to continue his comments an additional 5 minutes. Kay Ford seconded. Additional time for comments was unanimously approved. Mr. Walker was invited to continue his comments. Mr. Walker commented bus drivers need to be held accountable for following safe procedures and be made personally liable. He also commented it is a

conflict of interest for the Georgia Child Care Association to provide state-approved transportation training; training should be provided by certified child passenger safety technicians. He stated transportation forms are not always indicative of practices. For instance, providers can go back and correct forms on the day a consultant arrives. Therefore, consultants should observe the actual practices of loading and unloading.

3. Arlesia McCullough, McCullough Creative Children's Center, Atlanta, Ga., commented she has provided transportation for 20 years without incident but was recently fined for an incorrect signature on the paperwork. She stated such infractions should not be tied into a provider's license in a way that providers could lose their license or be shut down for a paperwork error. Providers are scared to offer transportation services, but in communities where parents rely on it, not offering the service will trickle down to the parents. Offering transportation should not jeopardize having a license to operate.

The public hearing was closed at 1:30 p.m.

8. Board Action on Rule Changes

Victor Morgan introduced proposed rule changes for board approval.

- i. Susan Harper motioned to approve rule chapter changes related to Child Care Learning Centers. Carlene Talton seconded. The board voted, and rule revisions were unanimously approved.
- ii. Janice Gallimore motioned to approve rule chapter changes related to Group Day Care Homes. Sherron Murphy seconded. The board voted, and rule revisions were unanimously approved.
- iii. Kathy Howell motioned to approve rule chapter changes related to Family Day Care Homes. Judy Neal seconded. The board voted, and rule revisions were unanimously approved.

The Commissioner thanked the members of the public who offered their comments. He expressed his support for some of the rule changes suggested by Mr. Walker. He stated he agreed that 15-passenger vans are dangerous according to transportation experts but addressing this would require a change in legislation. He suggested that interested parties should contact their legislators to express support for outlawing their use in child care. He indicated he wanted to speak with Ms. McCullough after the meeting.

9. Committee Reports

a. Budget & Finance

Carlene Talton reported for the Budget and Finance Committee. The committee reviewed the fiscal year 2014 budget.

b. Programs & Rules Committee

Sherron Murphy reported for the Programs Committee. The committee discussed Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards, Quality Rated, applications for Georgia's Pre-K and the Summer Transition Program, and Early Learning Challenge activities.

c. Ethics

Susan Harper reported for the Ethics Committee. Board members were previously requested to review recommended changes to Sections V through VIII of the board bylaws, in which revised verbiage has been proposed to ensure board bylaws are in line with state requirements.

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

Ms. Harper reported the Ethics Committee will not yet disband as a standing committee but has requested permission to review Section II, numbers 9 and 10, of the board bylaws dealing with appearances before the board. The committee will review in May and submit any proposed changes for approval in August.

10. Adjournment

The next meeting of the board will take place May 22, 2014. Victor Morgan requested board members also reserve a half day on May 21 for possibly reviewing the board strategic plan, contingent on the finalization of the department's strategic plan. Victor Morgan adjourned the meeting at 1:42 p.m.

Board Chair

Board Secretary