
Board of Early Care and Learning

Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting

Thursday, May 22, 2014, 9:00 a.m.

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department
of Early Care and Learning

2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SE – East Tower, Oak Room
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Bobby D. Cagle, Commissioner

Meeting Minutes

Board Members

Victor Morgan, Board Chair
Luann Purcell, Board Vice Chair
Susan Harper, Board Secretary
Janice Gallimore
Dawn Henderson

Kathy Howell
Jerri Kropp
Tammy Lenkeit
Judy Neal
Carlene Talton

Public Guests

Patty Bentley, State Representative
Kerri Wilson, Governor's Office of Planning and Budget

Kellen Carr
Melissa Johnson

Bright from the Start Staff

Bobby D. Cagle, Commissioner
Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Pre-K
Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System Reform
Keith Bostick, Deputy Commissioner for Programs
Craig Detweiler, Chief Information Officer
Reg Griffin, Chief Communications Officer
Carol Hartman, Assistant Commissioner for Programs
Ray Higgins, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration
Ira Sudman, Chief Legal Officer
Dee Bolden, CCS Program Operations Director
Shannon Carroll, CCS Northwest Lead Consultant
Melissa Davis, CCS Technical Assistance Manager
Woody Dover, Budget Administrator

Falita Flowers, Nutrition Services Acting Director
Janice Haker, Head Start State Collaboration Director
Zara Handsford, CCS Compliance Consultant
Randy Hudgins, Research Analyst
Margie Landers, Financial Services Director
Sharon McPherson, Accounting Manager
Rob O'Callaghan, Research and Evaluation Specialist
Rhonda Parker, CCS Northwest Regional Director
Donna Pettigrew-Jackson, Executive Assistant
Bentley Ponder, Research and Evaluation Director
Lisa Rambhajan, IT Administrative Assistant
Rian Ringsrud, Audits and Compliance Director
Robin Stevens, Human Resources Director
Mark Waits, Board Liaison/Grants Specialist
Liz Young, Government Relations Director

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

Susan Harper moved to accept the day's agenda. Luann Purcell seconded. The agenda was unanimously accepted. Judy Neal moved to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2014, meeting of the board. Susan Harper seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Inspiration

For inspiration, Dawnn Henderson read the poem “Today Is the Day” by Kenn Nesbitt.

4. Board Member Updates

Members of the board provided updates on their activities.

- Susan Harper and Dawnn Henderson reported joining a department webinar in March on the results of Phase Two of the Pre-K evaluation study.

5. Bright from the Start Presentations

Members of the executive staff provided updates on their program areas.

- Commissioner’s Update:** Commissioner Bobby Cagle presented updates on his activities. (See slides.) He presented highlights of the 2014 customer service survey and the 2014 employee survey, both conducted by Georgia State University. He reminded board members of his chats with employees and invited board members to attend. He stated senior leadership will be conducting field visits in follow-up to a staff request. He also gave an overview of the 2014 All Staff Meeting with the theme of “Leadership at All Levels.” He shared items the agency leadership has done in response to staff input, including lighter, more mobile equipment, venues for staff feedback such as an employee advisory group and an employee suggestion box, more recognition, and more training and education. He announced an upcoming study of the economic impact of the child care industry in Georgia commissioned by the department and conducted by researchers at the University of Georgia and at Georgia State University. He introduced the department’s “Look Again” campaign to raise awareness about making sure no child is ever left alone in a vehicle and invited board members to attend the official launch on May 27.

Susan Harper commented how helpful the department’s Facebook site is for keeping up with daily news related to the agency. Reg Griffin shared the department has also started a YouTube channel and will use it to release video statements; the department has also recently joined Pinterest. Dawnn Henderson commented Safe Kids Georgia and Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta can help spread the “Look Again” message via their social media networks. The Commissioner stated Department of Transportation highway signs will also be used for “Look Again” publicity.

The Commissioner introduced Representative Patty Bentley, the first state representative to attend a Board of Early Care and Learning meeting.

- Finance and Human Resources Update:** Ray Higgins presented updates on the department’s finances and human resources. (See slides.) He thanked the board for their input on the strategic plan. He gave an overview of department expenditures to date. He stated the department will return some surplus lottery funds to the state treasury at the end of June.

Mr. Higgins introduced Human Resources Director Robin Stevens. Ms. Stevens presented the Human Resources organizational structure and a snapshot of the department staff by employment status, by division, by place of residence, by education credential, by age, and by gender and ethnicity. She presented the number eligible for retirement in the next five years and initiatives to prepare for this loss of employees, including training in leadership development and conflict resolution.

- Programs Update:** Keith Bostick presented updates on the department’s program divisions. (See slides.) He presented on the department’s partnership with the Department of Human Services in determining CAPS eligibility and also presented child care subsidy access by race and ethnicity. Although the Hispanic proportion is low, the department has seen strong interest in Quality Rated in highly Hispanic areas of the state. Compared to national child care subsidy statistics, Georgia has a much higher proportion of center based care, a higher African-American proportion, and a lower Hispanic proportion. He stated these are children first who happen to have a need for subsidized care. Victor Morgan expressed appreciation for the emphasis on “people first” language.
- Child Care Services Update:** Dee Bolden presented updates on Child Care Services (CCS). (See slides.) She reported the department has been invited as one of eight states to participate in a series of Administration for Children and Families briefs on licensing activities. Child Care Services will be presenting at a national Child

Care Development Fund meeting next week and at the National Association for Regulatory Administration annual conference. She presented an update on the department's licensing exemptions. Since rules were updated in 2012, the department has been analyzing exempt programs further as requested by the board, including finding and visiting exempt programs statewide to collect data on their practices. She presented findings from the 2013 exemption data collection. Data collection through visits to exempt providers will continue this summer; these visits will include verification of copies of criminal record checks. Following this data collection, the department will perform additional analyses to inform next steps on exemptions. Ms. Lenkeit asked what the department does when they find health and safety issues on exemption visits; Ms. Bolden responded the department makes recommendations for improvement but has no authority to mandate changes.

- e. **Legal Update:** Ira Sudman presented updates on the legal unit. (See slides.) He presented summary statistics on statewide compliance with the new criminal records check requirements for child care employees that went into effect in January. As of May 1, 6,738 satisfactory determinations have been issued and only 136 unsatisfactory determinations. The average time to process an application has increased from 3.5 to 5.3 days because of the higher-than-anticipated number of providers applying early to meet the requirements of the law. He presented steps the agency is taking to reduce processing time. Three live webinars will be presented to the child care community in June.
- f. **Georgia's Pre-K Update:** Susan Adams presented updates on Georgia's Pre-K Program. (See slides.) She reported on the Summer Transition Program, a six-week program with smaller class sizes designed to boost language and literacy skills for children who have higher need. In addition to the summer program for rising kindergartners, in 2013 a pilot program for rising pre-kindergartners began for children whose home language is Spanish. This was developed in response to the first year results of the Pre-K evaluation, which showed Spanish-speaking Pre-K students remained behind their peers. Evaluation findings from both summer programs have demonstrated positive results. These findings are available on the department website. This summer the department will offer 62 classes serving 992 slots for the rising kindergarten program and 20 classes serving 280 slots for the rising pre-k program. Board members were invited to visit summer program classrooms. Funding for the programs comes from the department through a grant structure covering salaries, curriculum and materials, and operation costs. Mark Waits will send board members a list of programs and their locations.
- g. **Head Start Update:** Janice Haker presented updates on Head Start and the Head Start State Collaboration Office. (See slides.) She reported on the annual needs assessment survey of all Head Start grantees in the state. Continuing challenges that were identified include the lack of community resources for homeless populations, medical services for English language learners, child care subsidies for parents looking for work, access to professional development funding, health care access in rural areas, and costs of transportation services. She reported 221 Head Start centers have applied to Quality Rated and 23 have been rated. Georgia helped create a data compilation template for all the states in the southern region (Administration for Children and Families Region IV).

Ms. Haker also presented on the Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships grant opportunity, a soon-to-be-announced federal grant open to state agencies as well as local entities. Partnerships must include family and center child care as well as a state's child care subsidy program.
- h. **System Reform Update:** Kristin Bernhard presented updates on system reform. (See slides.) She presented on the department's proposed Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership grant. The department will not propose to operate Early Head Start programs but will seek to support Early Head Start. The department will target funding to new Early Head Start slots in technical colleges and Quality Rated two- and three-star providers, pilot Early Head Start in family child care, and support current Early Head Start providers in Quality Rated. The department's unique role will be in offering comprehensive services.

Ms. Bernhard presented an update on the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (ELC) grant implementation. Current and upcoming milestones include project scopes of work, new incentives launching July 1, and a Quality Rated validation retreat on July 16. She presented the department's process for identifying four Early Education Empowerment Zones for targeted investment under the ELC grant. Quantitative data indicators have been used to create a short list of potential zones. From these, qualitative factors based on talking to community partners will be used to determine the final zones. Susan Harper stated her desire to help provide information to leaders in her community and asked what information is available; Ms. Bernhard responded the department is creating a document that will explain the zones and their intentions. Other board members echoed

this desire to connect to people in their communities. Overall, about \$2 million will be invested in each zone, plus special investments from other projects. The department will connect to the philanthropic community to expand activities beyond the four zones.

- i. **Overview of DECAL Strategic Plan:** Dr. Bentley Ponder presented on the department's strategic plan. (See slides.) The plan was written to align with the Governor's strategic goals and has been submitted to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget. The plan links department programs to the mission and vision of the department and the agency's three strategic themes. The purpose of having a strategic plan is to ensure organizational alignment between the department's work units, improve communication, measurement and data-driven decision making, and foster accountability. Dr. Ponder presented results of staff feedback on the draft strategic plan. He stated the Early Learning Challenge aligns with the strategic plan particularly in the second theme of increasing quality and access. The Commissioner stated he has invited staff to seek clarification at any time that they cannot see how a work assignment connects to the strategic plan.

6. Committee Meetings and Lunch

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. Committee Reports

Committees reported on their work.

- a. **Budget & Finance:** Carlene Talton reported for the Budget and Finance Committee. The committee reviewed the fiscal year 2014 budget. Victor Morgan presented Margie Landers, soon to retire, a board commendation in recognition of her years of service.
- b. **Programs & Rules:** Jerri Kropp reported for the Programs Committee. The committee discussed Quality Rated participation, the possibility of the Department of Defense recognizing Quality Rated as an accreditation, the Georgia's Pre-K application and funding process, the Summer Transition Program, monitoring of licensed centers and homes, and the new technical assistance unit in Child Care Services.
- c. **Ethics:** Susan Harper reported for the Ethics Committee. The committee reviewed Section II, numbers 9 and 10, of the board bylaws dealing with submission of written information to the board and appearances before the board. They also looked at how the number of consecutive terms will be counted if a board member fills a board office mid-term. Revisions will be presented for acceptance at the next board meeting.
 - i. The committee recommended the board accept the proposed bylaw changes for consideration. The board voted and unanimously accepted bylaw recommendations, to be voted on for adoption at the next board meeting.

8. Public Hearing

A time for public comment to the board was made available to the public. No one from the public requested time to comment.

9. Adjournment

The next meeting of the board will take place August 21, 2014. Victor Morgan adjourned the meeting at 1:06 p.m.