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## **Board of Early Care and Learning**

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### **Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting**

Thursday, November 13, 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

Amy Jacobs, Interim Commissioner

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## **Meeting Minutes**

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### Board Members

Victor Morgan, Board Chair  
Susan Harper, Board Secretary  
Phil Davis  
Kay Ford  
Dawn Henderson  
Kathy Howell

Tangela Johnson  
Jerri Kropp  
Tammy Lenkeit  
Sherron Murphy  
Judy Neal  
Carlene Talton

### Public Guests

William Willoughby, Governor's Office of Planning and  
Budget  
Channie Frazier (by telephone)  
Melissa Johnson  
Nnenna Ogbu

Elizabeth Newcomb  
Ellen Reynolds  
Roy Robinson  
Ann Rosenthal

### Bright from the Start Staff

Amy Jacobs, Interim Commissioner  
Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Pre-K and  
Instructional Support  
Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System  
Reform  
Deidria Bolden, Assistant Commissioner for Federal  
Programs and Administration  
Keith Bostick, Deputy Commissioner for Programs  
Craig Detweiler, Chief Information Officer  
Reg Griffin, Chief Communications Officer  
Ray Higgins, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and  
Administration  
Kristie Lewis, Assistant Commissioner for Child Care  
Services  
Ira Sudman, Chief Legal Officer

Sarah Beck, System Reform Coordinator  
Woody Dover, Budget Administrator  
Shani Drake, Nutrition Program Marketing and Outreach  
Manager  
Falita Flowers, Nutrition Services Director  
Janice Haker, Head Start State Collaboration Director  
Tamara Hall, Childcare and Parent Services Director  
Carol Hartman, Director of Policy & System Reform  
Laura Johns, Early Education Empowerment Zone  
Director  
Sharon McPherson, Accounting Manager  
Rob O'Callaghan, Research and Evaluation Specialist  
Lisa Rambhajan, Information Technology Assistant  
Pam Stevens, Quality Rated Director  
Robin Stevens, Human Resources Director  
Mark Waits, Special Assistant to the Commissioner  
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

Phil Davis moved to accept the day's agenda. Kay Ford seconded. The agenda was unanimously accepted. Kathy Howell moved to approve the minutes of the August 21, 2014, meeting of the board. Kay Ford seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

## 3. Inspiration

For inspiration, Victor Morgan shared a scenario imagining himself as a Kindergarten teacher. He asked what Thanksgiving is about and what board members are thankful for. He shared that he is thankful for the opportunity to support an agency that supports young children and their families.

## 4. Board Member Updates

Members of the board provided updates on their activities.

- Kay Ford reported that the Chatham County Chamber of Commerce has placed restoring Pre-K funding on its legislative agenda.
- Susan Harper reported attending Early Education Empowerment Zone (E<sup>3</sup>Z) signing ceremonies in Valdosta and Macon. In Macon, she visited two Quality Rated programs and had lunch with technical assistance providers.
- Dawnn Henderson reported visiting two preschools in October, including Ivy Hall Day School in Kennesaw where the First Lady read a story to the children. She stated this preschool has teachers fluent in Spanish, Chinese, and English, so that children are mastering three languages at the same time.
- Judy Neal reported reading in some centers in October and working closely with her state representatives to secure their support for early learning.
- Jerri Kropp reported receiving a Quality Rated visit in Georgia Southern University's preschool.
- Sherron Murphy reported reading to two Pre-K classrooms.
- Victor Morgan reported attending a GEEARS early education summit in October featuring Georgia's Senate, School Superintendent, and gubernatorial candidates. He also reported attending the E<sup>3</sup>Z signing ceremony in Dalton and visiting a Pre-K program.

## 5. Bright from the Start Presentations

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

- Commissioner's Update:** Interim Commissioner Amy Jacobs presented updates on her activities. (See slides.) She presented highlights of Georgia's Pre-K Week, held in October and sponsored by Voices for Georgia's Children, during which the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, 30 state senators, and 83 state representatives visited Pre-K programs. She reported on the state's application for the federal preschool expansion grant that would add Pre-K and Summer Transition Program slots. She reported participating in the four E<sup>3</sup>Z signing ceremonies. She stated Child Care Services has completed its Enforcement Task Force work. She reported \$10 million has been raised to support Quality Rated improvement grants. She shared results of a GEEARS poll demonstrating the strong support of Georgia voters for early learning programs, showing, for example, that 74% of Georgia voters favored a plan to support early care and education. Video clips were shown from a series produced in partnership with Dole Packaged Foods to support healthy cooking with children in which Commissioner Jacobs, DPH Commissioner Brenda Fitzgerald, and Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle participated.
- Finance and Human Resources Update:** Ray Higgins presented updates on the department's finances and human resources. (See slides.) Expenditures are on track for the fiscal year. He presented ideas the agency has for the coming year's legislative agenda, including addressing how private donations in support of the agency's work can be handled and minor changes to the criminal records check law.

- c. **Child Care Services Update:** Kristie Lewis presented updates on Child Care Services (CCS). (See slides.) License fees are due at the end of the year and are beginning to be paid. DECAL seeks to avoid license revocations for failure to pay and is working with programs that do not pay the fee in a timely manner. She reported in the summer of 2014 CCS consultants identified 83 day camps that receive child care subsidy payments. Consultants visited these sites to evaluate health and safety, and the findings will be compared to the previous summer. DeKalb and Fulton counties had the largest number of programs. The project found that the majority of programs met licensing rules, even though as exempt programs, they are not required to do so; this indicates promise in the department's ability to work with these programs. However, CCS also found many of these programs did not have the required local approvals.

Ms. Lewis also reported on the conclusion of the Enforcement Sanction Task Force, which met over nine months to develop a Violation Enforcement Chart to ensure consistent application of enforcement actions. The enforcement actions detailed in the chart will be piloted by the agency. Kay Ford commented the lack of a consistent enforcement process was a big concern in the field and commended the department for taking these steps. Phil Davis inquired if there is a mechanism where programs not in compliance with one government agency would be known to other agencies. Ms. Lewis responded there currently is not. Dawn Henderson inquired what qualifies a program as exempt from licensing. Ms. Lewis responded there are 14 categories of exemption based on characteristics such as being government owned and operated, the age of children in care, the number of hours children are in care, or others as provided for by Georgia law.

- d. **Programs Update:** Keith Bostick presented updates on the department's program divisions. (See slides.) He invited two parents of children in child care to present on the importance of quality child care for their families.

Channie Frazier, whose child attends a child care center in Statesboro, reported (via teleconference) on the center's participation in Quality Rated and the process of becoming a three-star center. She reported on the positive changes she has seen in the classroom and the language growth and artistic development of her child. Phil Davis inquired how she chose a child care program; Ms. Frazer responded she visited several child care programs for her first child and that this center stuck out from the rest. Mr. Bostick stated the department intends to expand Quality Rated and provide access and opportunity for quality early learning for all Georgia's children.

Roy Robinson, whose child attends a Montessori child care center in Atlanta, reported on the positive impact the school has had on his child's exploration and support for music, language, and fostering independence. The school has also supported their family's language diversity. His child has flourished in this setting. Phil Davis inquired how their family concluded that a Montessori program would be preferable; Mr. Robinson responded that having friends who recommended this particular program was a significant part of the decision. Mr. Bostick commented on the importance of child care impacting the entire family. Victor Morgan stated the goal is to have every child have access to high quality.

- e. **Federal Programs Update:** Deidria Bolden presented updates on federal programs. (See slides.) She presented the number of meals served through the Child and Adult Care Food Program and the Summer Food Service Program. She stated Webster County is the only county in the state not participating in nutrition programs. The department is working with the school system in Webster to offer meals since there are no licensed child care programs in this county. She reported on recruitment efforts for the 2015 summer program. She also reported on the *Farm 2 Preschool* grant from the USDA to develop child care wellness policies, offer training, and award mini-grants for urban gardens in child care programs.

Ms. Bolden presented updates on the CAPS child care subsidy program. Policy changes in response to the CAPS Task Force will be released in December. A transition plan is underway on the transition of eligibility services to the department from the Department of Human Services.

Tangela Johnson inquired what qualifies a program to be an at-risk afterschool program. Shani Drake responded that the afterschool program had to be a component of a licensed facility or exempt through DECAL. The program also must have a structured afterschool enrichment activity and be located in a low-income area where 50% or more of the children in the local public schools receive free or reduced-price meals. Phil Davis inquired if there is a way to approach some nutrition outreach through larger entities such as at a regional basis. Ms. Bolden responded many programs will cross county lines to offer nutrition services.

- f. **Head Start State Collaboration Update:** Janice Haker presented updates on Head Start and the Head Start State Collaboration Office. (See slides.) She shared highlights of the 50-year history of the federal Head Start early

childhood program. The most recent program changes were passed in the Head Start reauthorization of 2007. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 doubled funding for Early Head Start, and the Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership grant was introduced in 2014. Current Early Head Start funding is adequate to serve only 2% of the eligible population. Over 26,000 children are served in Head Start in Georgia, including 4,845 children in blended Head Start/Georgia’s Pre-K programs. Over 3,000 children are served in Early Head Start in Georgia. Head Start programs in Georgia also support Quality Rated, with 60% to 70% of programs participating.

Ms. Haker also presented on the Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership grant opportunity, a soon-to-be-announced federal award open to state agencies and local entities. Partnerships may include family and center child care as well as a state’s child care subsidy program.

- g. Georgia’s Pre-K and Instructional Support Update:** Susan Adams presented updates on Georgia’s Pre-K Program. (See slides.) She presented Pre-K enrollment data comparing September 2013 to September 2014. She explained Pre-K funding allocates more slots than budgeted to spread programs further across the state, knowing not every class will be filled with 22 children. Classes are allocated in blocks of 22 slots, but payments are based on per child enrollment. Both enrollment and the waiting list are lower than they were a year ago. One reason is that the four-year-old population has decreased. The waiting list may represent a lack of capacity, particularly in the metropolitan Atlanta area, but also may represent that families want to enroll in a specific program even though there may be slots available elsewhere. Georgia also funds 120 full inclusion classrooms, which limit class size to 20 children rather than 22. The department has also looked at how to reallocate funds when classes are closed. About 40% of classes close due to low enrollment; 25% close when the entire child care program closes; 15% are closed by the department for reasons such as low quality; and the remaining classes close voluntarily for a variety of reasons. The department is developing materials to help programs recruit hard-to-reach families. Phil Davis inquired what the impact of lowering Pre-K class sizes to 20 would be; Ms. Adams responded changing the class size to 20 would lower the enrollment break-even point for child care programs but would cost the state about \$32 million.

Ms. Adams presented on the state’s application to the federal preschool expansion grant that would serve additional income-eligible children in mixed income classrooms and enhance program quality. Georgia’s grant proposal requested \$32.5 million over four years to serve 1,044 school year slots and 1,650 summer slots in five targeted regions. Georgia’s Pre-K already meets many of the grant’s funding opportunities, but the state proposed to expand services for children with disabilities and for dual language learners. Phil Davis inquired whether the targeted regions would address the Pre-K waiting list. Ms. Adams responded Georgia’s proposal would allow a year to build capacity in some high waiting list areas. Mr. Davis also inquired where Georgia ranks in percent of four year olds served; Ms. Adams responded the state ranks eighth in the percent served and third in the number served, but not every state ranked ahead of Georgia offers a full-year, full-day program. Tangela Johnson inquired what geographic level the state looked at for the grant’s regions. Ms. Adams responded the agency looked at capacity and the percent and number served both at county and zip code levels. Ms. Johnson also inquired whether child care providers experience a financial gain by participating in Georgia’s Pre-K. Ms. Adams responded Pre-K is not designed to generate revenue in itself, and many programs lose money on Pre-K classrooms but value the classrooms as a marketing tool. Ellen Reynolds confirmed that private child care providers report losing money on each Pre-K classroom. Ms. Adams added that school systems also typically supplement state Pre-K funding with local funds.

- h. System Reform Update:** Kristin Bernhard presented updates on system reform. (See slides.) She highlighted two key projects in the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (ELC) grant. The four Early Education Empowerment Zones have been selected and were celebrated through signing ceremonies. The agency is working to ramp up participation and rating levels in each zone. For the Quality Rated access and availability project, she presented statewide recruitment efforts, reporting an increase of over 200 programs since the August board meeting. The state is on pace to reach 100% participation by the end of 2017. Ms. Bernhard presented Quality Rated participation by county. She reported that current marketing and communication efforts include targeted outreach through licensing consultants to four-year compliant programs, with follow-up from the child care resource and referral agencies. She also reported the agency has streamlined the front-facing webpage for Quality Rated. A Quality Rated participation graphic presented on the agency’s Facebook page each month and distributed to partners to be included in their newsletters remains a popular feature.

