
Board of Early Care and Learning

Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting
Thursday, May 11, 2017, 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, Commissioner

Meeting Minutes

Board Members

Victor Morgan, Board Chair
Susan Harper, Board Vice Chair
Phil Davis
Jerri Kropp
Melissa Boekhaus
Kay Ford
Tangela Johnson
Luann Purcell
Carlene Talton

Public Guests

Kelly Farr
Melissa Johnson
Brian Lipton
Lynn Manfredi/Petitt
Ashley Hope

Jan Reyes
Alecia Parks
Paul Walker

Bright from the Start Staff

Amy Jacobs, Commissioner
Elisabetta Kasfir, Assistant Commissioner for Federal Programs
Ira Sudman, Chief Legal Officer
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
William Cox, Director of Infrastructure
Woody Dover, Budget Administrator
Falita Flowers, Nutrition Services Director
Carol Hartman, Policy and System Reform Director
Sharon McPherson, Director of Finance
Rian Ringsrud, Director of Audits and Compliance

Mark Waits, Special Assistant to the Commissioner
Jessie Bruno, Data and Research Coordinator
Faith Duncan, Regional Manager Central
Robin Stevens, Human Resources Director
Laura Wagner, Family Support Director
Donna Johnson, Family Support Director
Carrie Ashbee, Executive Director, Foundation for Early Care and Learning
Brian McKeen, Privacy Attorney
April Rogers, CCS Director for Policy and Enforcement
Kristen Huie, System Reform Coordinator
Pam Stevens, Quality Rated Policy and Partnerships Director
Denise Jensen, Quality Rated Operations Director
Kori Woodward-Dickens, Legal Services Officer

1. Call to Order and Welcome

Board Chair Victor Morgan called the meeting to order. He welcomed the board members, Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) staff, and public guests.

2. Approval of 5/11/17 Agenda and 2/16/17 Minutes

Board Chair Morgan referred to the proposed agenda for the meeting. Phil Davis moved to accept the day's agenda. Jerri Kropp seconded. The agenda was unanimously accepted. The chairman reminded members that they had received the minutes from the February board meeting. Davis moved to approve the minutes of the February 16 meeting. Carlene Talton seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Inspiration

Dr. Luann Purcell provided the inspiration of the day. Purcell referred to Commissioner Jacobs' letter from the May Decidedly DECAL about organizational excellence, one of DECAL's core values. She reiterated that organizational excellence is about being perfect together. She dedicated her message to outgoing board chair Victor Morgan who she said has had a significant influence on the board. By being perfect together, said Purcell, we can make a difference in the lives of Georgia's children.

4. Board Member Updates

Members of the board provided updates on their activities:

- Susan Harper attended a CAPS family forum in Tifton in March. The forum was a collaboration between DECAL and UGA. Families were asked about their experience with and thoughts about the CAPS program. She also mentioned that she had dinner with a friend who had no idea that Dougherty County had Pre-K. This illustrates how important it is that board members talk with friends and family about all that DECAL does across the state.
- Phil Davis was reminded about DECAL's work recently. While driving, he saw a child care business whose sign indicated it was Quality Rated in lettering larger than the business' name.
- Tangela Johnson spoke with a friend who wants to start a family day care. She will have a second meeting with her to discuss what services/resources DECAL can provide and explain to her about being Quality Rated.
- Melissa Boekhaus works with Wellstar which is partnering with Cobb County to promote early literacy. The office is talking to parents who come in to Wellstar about the importance of reading to infants and toddlers.
- Jerri Kropp has a new granddaughter who is three weeks old. Her mom has no experience in locating quality child care. Kropp has discussed with her how to use South Carolina's rating system to find a quality center.

5. Bright from the Start Presentations

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

a. Finance, Administration, and Legislative Update:

Ray Higgins presented the last quarter's budget report. DECAL is on track to finish the quarter strong with a surplus of lottery dollars that will be returned to the state treasury. The Summer Transition Program will expand to an additional 27 classes. The department's recently concluded audit showed no agency specific findings or issues, and the department is in good standing. The Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards (SEFA), is listed as one part of a statewide (not agency specific) finding. In 2015 the federal General Accounting Office (GAO) updated internal accounting controls in their publication. Later that year, the State Accounting Office (SAO) began to renew focus on agencies adopting the GAO publication. DECAL has worked to submit everything on time and sufficiently. The state audit essentially reported the department is on track to meet these new requirements.

SAO is an enterprise level agency responsible for creating the accounting policies and procedures that state agencies must follow. They create a Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) every year that is reported to the public, bond rating agencies, and other stakeholders. To compile this every year DECAL must provide a variety of information to SAO per their forms, instructions, and templates. DECAL, as with past years, treated payments to local school boards as similar to payments to the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). Therefore, they were not included. The ledgers/financials were correct, but payments to local school boards needed to be included. The statewide finding is broad and recommends the state improve its controls, instructions, and communication around the creation of this schedule overall. This is a minor issue with a simple fix.

Tangela Johnson asked for clarification: Did it look like we were entering payments twice? Answer: The amounts weren't in the SEFA, so DECAL just needed to add them into the document. Phil asked for clarification on what payments are being discussed. Answer: The payments from us that go to the school boards. Mr. Higgins shared briefly about the legislative update. Neither SB 97 nor SB 98 passed. HB494 was introduced this session and next year it will come up again.

b. Federal Program Updates:

Elisabetta Kasfir presented on the ongoing work engaging stakeholders on the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program and updated the board on the CAPS eligibility transition project. She reminded the board that new federal rules/regulations mandated by the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2016 meant that DECAL needed to change the state plan for administering CCDF funding. A new plan was proposed that would limit funding except for priority groups but would increase base rates, decrease family fees, and increase tiered bonuses for quality providers. The plan was to go into effect in October 2016. When the plan was announced in August 2016, providers, families and advocates shared concerns about the plan. So, the CAPS team delayed implementing parts of the plan to solicit feedback from stakeholders. The tiered bonus changes were implemented, and the percentage paid to quality centers on top of their rates was increased.

To solicit feedback DECAL distributed a provider survey; held two community meetings; and conducted four family forums. Laura Wagner, CAPS Family Support Director, led meetings in Bibb and DeKalb counties attended by a total of 110 people, 90% of whom were child care providers. During each meeting the CCDF changes that occurred over the years were explained. Also discussed were the eligibility transfer from DFCS to DECAL; what "family support" looks like in CAPS; and what kinds of support CAPS families might need.

Donna Johnson, CAPS Family Support Director, hosted forums in several locations with a total of 41 participants. The purpose was to gather information, give information about the program, dispel myths, facilitate discussion, and answer questions. Some participants said that the meeting didn't feel like a typical state agency. Participants were respectful of the time, and listened to each other and shared openly. The Carl Vinson Institute of Government facilitated the meetings. The focus of the meetings was to gather information that reflected what was important to most to families as they search for a child care provider. Ms. Johnson explained to the board that the Family Support component is an opportunity for CAPS to provide more than a subsidy, but to also link families to other programs and resources they might not be aware of.

Susan Harper attended one of the meetings and noticed that families came in feeling tenuous about what was happening. She said that Donna and Laura did a great job presenting to families at the meetings.

Tangela Johnson asked: What is the reality of being able to fulfill CAPS goals that, at least on the surface, seem to be competing? Elisabetta Kasfir responded: If we implement these changes in an incremental way, the impact will be less dramatic. DECAL will require all CAPS providers to be Quality Rated by 2020. The tiered bonus may help increase quality.

c. Commissioner's Update:

Commissioner Jacobs gave an overview of the important actions taken by the General Assembly that affect DECAL. The Governor's proposal for creating the center of early language and literacy at Georgia College and State University has been signed; the center will open by July 1. This center will be a resource for teachers, professionals, families and communities statewide. Governor Deal named Commissioner Jacobs to the board, which will meet for the first time in June. One of the first events hosted by the Center is a *Governor's Summit* at which teams from across the state will talk about what they want to see from the center, and hear from experts on brain development, child literacy, etc.

Commissioner Jacobs announced the creation of the Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning. The Foundation will be DECAL's nonprofit arm to support teachers and providers in new and innovative ways. Additionally, this foundation will serve as an emergency fund for early childhood education centers affected by natural disasters. The Commissioner introduced Carrie Ashbee, who previously worked in the Governor's Office, who has been appointed Executive Director of the Foundation.

Commissioner Jacobs reported on her participation at the Miller Legacy Dinner honoring Governor Zell Miller on his 85th birthday. The event was sponsored by the Miller Institute for Public Policy led by Governor Miller's grandson. Commissioner Jacobs spoke on the history of and statistics related to Georgia's Pre-K Program.

She also reported on her involvement on the Older Adults Cabinet recently created by Governor Deal. DECAL is represented on behalf of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Commissioner Jacobs mentioned DECAL's internship program which is in its second phase. The program provides a great opportunity for students to learn about state government. She introduced DECAL interns Shannon Williams, Isha Barrie, Ryan Williams, Afoma Okoye, and Kiersten Nicholson were introduced. Board chair Victor Morgan thanked the interns for their work over the year for DECAL.

Tangela asked if the adult meal component of the CACFP coordinates at all with Meals on Wheels. Commissioner Jacobs explained that the CACFP is funded by USDA to serve senior citizens enrolled in a senior "day care" program, not seniors living in their homes or in an assisted living environment. Victor Morgan asked if the program is part of the possible budget cuts from the federal government. Commissioner Jacobs said DECAL doesn't anticipate the service being affected, but the department is watching closely. Kay Ford added that her local community is also concerned about cuts.

d. Child Care Services Updates

Kristie Lewis reminded the board that later in the meeting there will be a public hearing and a board vote on proposed rule changes in support of the new enforcement and compliance system. The department has done its due diligence in communicating about the proposed changes through webinars, presentations, and a month-long public comment period. There's been minimal feedback. If the board votes to approve the proposed changes, implementation will be July 1.

Data from the Exemption Visit Project has been sent to Child Trends, who are beginning to review and analyze the data to address questions and compare licensed centers to exempt centers. They hope to share what they have found and make recommendations on next steps at the August board meeting.

DECAL is 11 months into the new enforcement and compliance system that calculates compliance in a new way. Previously compliance was determined by core rules and by categories. Now, the system is based on individual rules and counts all rules, not just the core rules. All rules receive a point or numerical value. Based on this new system, approximately 95% of our programs are in good standing.

April Rogers, CCS Director for Policy and Enforcement, provided more details on the new system. (See slides for data and charts.) Rogers explained that this is a progressive system, meaning that when a facility is first cited, they do not receive points, but if the violation(s) is not corrected, points will accumulate on future licensing visits. At each visit, the center's previous 12-month history is reviewed to determine if there are repeated violations. The system is composed of four classes of rule violations, from low harm to extreme harm. DECAL expected that the reported number of violations would increase once the compliance system was automated. FY16 had 283 enforcement actions, and FY17 had 374 enforcement actions. In this fiscal year a number of providers have received enforcement fines under the new system for not maintaining compliance. DECAL anticipates in the second year of implementation the increase will level out as providers become more proficient in understanding how the new compliance and enforcement system works. Providers are visited twice a year and some of them may have received two enforcement fines over the course of the year. In some cases instead of paying fines, providers are allowed to use the funds to correct the issue(s) that resulted in the fines, such as repairing indoor equipment, adding mulch to the playground or providing additional training to their staff.

Victor Morgan commented that he liked the idea that if a facility is fined, they can take the dollars and use them to correct the program. Ms. Rogers responded that providers really appreciate that they are allowed to do that.

e. BREAK

f. Georgia Pre-K Program/Instructional Support Update

Faith Duncan, Director of Pre-K Field Operations, spoke on behalf of Susan Adams. She announced that Pre-K application season for the 2017-2018 school year is underway. DECAL received 1,052 applications that will be reviewed by Pre-K consultants. Summer Transition Programs will begin soon for Rising Kindergarten students (children who did not attend Pre-K or need more attention before Kindergarten) and for Rising Pre-K students (focusing on English language learners). See slides for totals of applications received and funded. Competition for the new Pre-K Teachers of the Year is underway. DECAL received 35 applications. Commissioner Jacobs and Assistant Commissioner Susan Adams, Meghan McNail, and Stephanie Blank recognized the finalists who each received a \$500 check. The finalists will participate in additional activities to determine the two winners. Prizes include individual cash awards and classroom supplies and materials. The previous winners will help select the new winners.

Mark Waits added that some board members visited STP sites last year, and Ms. Duncan invited board members to do the same this summer.

GKIDS Readiness Check has been a collaborative effort of DECAL and the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). It has been piloted in Georgia's Pre-K classes and has received feedback from stakeholders. Faith Duncan introduced Jan Reyes and Ashley Hope, GaDOE staff with whom DECAL staff have worked on the project. Ms. Hope presented on the new Kindergarten assessment.

g. Report on New Kindergarten Assessment

The GKIDS Readiness Check, Georgia's Kindergarten assessment, is a formative tool for teachers to use at the beginning of the school year to plan instruction. DECAL's Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS), grounded in five learning domains, lay the groundwork for the readiness check. This tool allows teacher to collect individual student data within the first six weeks of school. In training teachers, GaDOE has made it clear that this assessment is not intended to label students as ready or not ready, to evaluate teacher instruction, or to prevent children's entry to kindergarten. The assessment focuses on three domains. The first is Foundation of School Success, often regarded as the most important indicators. The second is English Language Arts. The final domain is Mathematics. The tool was launched in fall 2016. An inter-rater reliability study demonstrated that agreement rates were high. GaDOE has developed Readiness Check Reports that will be sent home to families that explain the assessment and how teachers may use the information.

Susan Harper asked how GKIDS is administered. Answer: It is administered one-on-one between child and teacher, in small group instruction, or by observation. Phil Davis asked how the tool is used. Answer: The tool is designed to help teachers know where the students are academically, socially, etc. and support teachers in planning instruction.

Teacher training will take place from May-July 2017 for Kindergarten teachers. GaDOE is collaborating with Georgia Public Broadcasting to develop a parent resource. The website provides information to parents in English and Spanish. GKIDS will need to be revised to measure 1st grade readiness.

h. Legal Update

Ira Sudman, Chief Legal Officer, introduced Brian McKeen, an attorney new to DECAL who has two roles with the department: privacy and security. Mr. McKeen presented on his background and on why keeping sensitive information private and secure is important for Georgia residents, DECAL employees, and the board. He explained that DECAL's immediate goals in these areas are to update DECAL's privacy and security related policies and procedures, update privacy/security language in DECAL contracts and agreements, provide effective training to all DECAL employees, and to review and update IT security protocols.

Phil Davis asked if maintaining privacy and security is or will it be part of the enforcement for compliance for child care providers. Answer: McKeen explained that his role is solely internal to ensure DECAL's privacy and security policies. Providers are not regulated by FERPA. They would have to receive funds directly from the U.S. Department of Education to be subject to FERPA regulations.

i. Communications Update

Reg Griffin, Chief Communications Officer, presented an update on media coverage of DECAL since the last board meeting. (See slides for charts and graphics.) WSB has shown interest in exempt programs. DECAL is working with them to clarify what the exemption program means. DECAL is also working more closely with exempt providers, to communicate with them more frequently and to provide information to families who are using exempt programs. The AJC is interested in what is going on with the CAPS program, and will possible release an article closer to July. Fox 5 is interested in the Summer Food Service Program especially a case in Barnesville of alleged abuse of funds. DECAL is

working to reclaim fraudulently claimed funds. 11 Alive has been following an ongoing story on programs that have received multiple licensing citations yet continue to receive CAPS funds. Mr. Griffin assured the board that he will notify board members when these stories break.

He mentioned the addition of DECALTV to DECAL's internal, employee website. This idea came out of the Commissioner's Corner at the All-Staff meetings as a new way to keep employees throughout DECAL, especially our field staff, informed on agency updates every month. He showed a short segment of DECALTV and a news clip of an after-school program that is now Quality Rated.

Griffin announced that the Look Again campaign is kicking off on June 14, 10:30 a.m. in the State Capitol North Wing. The Governor and First Lady will participate again this year. The Commissioner will film the new PSA next week at a child care facility.

Susan Harper announced that it was Griffin's birthday and presented him with a card.

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 were open to the public.

7. Public Hearing/Public Comment Period

Board Chair Morgan opened the floor for the public hearing portion of the meeting. Two board members, Dawnn Henderson and Kathy Howell, joined the public hearing via phone. Morgan introduced Kori Woodward-Dickens, as the official officer of the public hearing, to facilitate the public hearing and receive verbal comments on the proposed rule changes. The hearing was recorded and is accessible to the public. The public hearing began at 1:03 p.m. No written comments were received during the one-month public comment period. One person signed up to make public comments to the board.

Mr. Paul Walker, Favorite Time Academy, signed up to speak. Address: 101 Dallas Acworth Hwy, Dallas, Ga. Walker supports all the rule changes and is excited to see the rules being added to the core rules. Walker said the provisional employee section of the CRCs is not needed at this time. There is zero correlation between ratio violations and background checks. The provisional employee standards allow more room for error. One thing that is missing is it doesn't address whether CPR certification is expired or not. Perhaps having some language and provision there is needed. He did express concern that taking rules and combining them into a paragraph may take away from the understanding and make it more complicated to read. Rule 591 1-1-511, the way providers are trained is very different from what the rule states. Where rule refers to activity should be broken down more.

After Mr. Walker spoke, Ms. Dickens recessed the public hearing to allow official business to proceed (as per board guidelines).

8. Committee Reports

Committees reported on their work.

a. Budget & Finance:

Carlene Talton reported for the Budget and Finance committee. Sharon MacPherson presented a new report that allowed the finance committee members to view the agency's revenue and expenditures for each available fund source. In addition to explaining the numbers presented, Ray Higgins discussed how the Cash Management Act governed how the agency can use our available fund sources and how that governance impacted the numbers presented.

b. Programs & Rules:

Jerri Kropp reported for the Programs and Rules committee. During the meeting, Elisabetta Kasfir provided more details on the CAPS transition. The management team is almost complete, and now are working to fill the other 189 positions. She is partnering with IT and other DECAL units during the transition. Georgia Gateway is expanding. Elisabetta is also excited to work with partner agencies on this project.

Falita Flowers reported on the meal requirements for the federal nutrition programs going into effect on October 1st. The Summer Food Service Program is ramping up.

Faith Duncan explained the Pre-K application process in more detail. She also reported on the work being done by DECAL's Instructional Supports staff who are partnering with Best Practices at Georgia State. A Georgia's Pre-K Program consultant recently made a presentation in Texas on DECAL's instructional supports for teachers.

Susan Harper commented that she thought we were funded for 84,000 Pre-K slots. Duncan responded that some slots are only for Head Start students, or for inclusion slots. Currently, 80,842 children served. We look at where the openings are to measure how many programs are there, what the saturation rate is, while comparing how many children are eligible. The hope is that this number will go up after application. Georgia's Pre-K Program currently serves over 60% of Georgia's age eligible children. Susan Adams would like to see that go to 75%.

c. System Reform:

Susan Harper reported for the System Reform committee. In March federal reviewers conducted a fiscal review of Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. This project is in its second year of operation with only 191 slots currently. The program serves children from age six weeks to three years old. Some EHS programs are in family child care learning homes. The programs are receiving positive feedback. DECAL submitted a non-competitive application for funding to continue this program. DECAL and Sheltering Arms have been invited to the Early Head Start Expansion and Planning meeting in Virginia. Georgia's model for providing EHS services is looked at as an innovative example.

The Quality Rated Policy and Partnership is looking at families served by CAPS. By 2020, any facility receiving CAPS funding must have at least a one-star Quality Rating. (See handout for more details.)

Soon over 1,300 facilities will be Quality Rated. The technology for the program is constantly being updated for providers and consultants.

Kay Ford asked "In the last bullet (on the handout), does "streamline the assessment" mean providers will know the results quicker? Answer from Denise Jenson: Currently, the process can be lengthy from submitting the portfolio, to the 90-day observation window, and a 60-day window for final report reviews before notification. It could be a five-month process for a center from submitting the portfolio to receiving a rating. DECAL is working to shorten that time by making the observation window 30 days, so it is a 60-day window total. This will take some time to implement, and DECAL is looking at infrastructure changes to support this new policy. DECAL wants to streamline this initial submission process, so the moment the assessor is notified of the assessment, they will already have all the information they need.

Susan Harper commented that this will be good for the providers who have spent over a year working on their portfolio.

Kay Ford requested an update to this discussion at the August meeting.

9. Action on Proposed Rule Changes

Public hearing officer Kori Woodward-Dickens reconvened the public rule making hearing. Upon learning that no additional parties had signed up to comment, Ms. Dickens adjourned the public hearing and turned the meeting over to the board for action. Board chair Victor Morgan asks if board members had any questions. None were asked. Morgan asked for board to take action on the proposed rule changes pertaining to Family Child Care Learning Homes as outlined on the PowerPoint slide. Susan Harper made a motion to approve/adopt the changes. Luanne Purcell seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Morgan asked for board to take action on the proposed rule changes pertaining to Child Care Learning Centers as outlined on the next three PowerPoint slides. Melissa Boekhaus moved to approve/adopt the changes, and Kay Ford seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

10. Election of New Board Chair

Board Chair Morgan reminded the board that as per the board bylaws his term as board chair was over. He directed the board to the election of board officers. Luann Purcell made a motion to move forward with electing a new board chair. Phil Davis seconded.

Morgan ask for nominations for the next board chair. Phil Davis nominated Susan Harper. Kay Ford moved for the nominations to be closed, and Tangela Johnson seconded. Susan Harper was elected board chair unanimously.

Ms. Harper's election created a vacancy in the board vice chair position. Morgan asked for nominations for vice chair. Kay Ford nominated Jerri Kropp. Carlene Talton and Luann Purcell moved and seconded. Jerri Kropp was elected board vice chair unanimously.

Board Chair Susan Harper and Vice Chair Jerri Kropp will begin serving in these positions at the next meeting on August 17, 2017.

11. Closing Remarks/Adjournment

Commissioner Jacobs thanked Morgan for his years of service as chair of the Board of Early Care and Learning. Jacobs also congratulated Harper in her new role.

Morgan adjourned the meeting at 1:39 p.m.