

Board of Early Care and Learning

Meeting Summary

May 10, 2018

**Attendees**

**Board Members:** Susan Harper, Victor Morgan, Phil Davis, Kathy Howell, Dr. Luann Purcell

**Guests:** *Mark Waits, Victor Morgan, Maryane Gibson, Jorge Verlenden, Pam Runkle, George Huntzicker, Kayla Washington, Wande Okunoren-Meadows, and Dr. Sharona Fountain*

**Bright from the Start Staff:** Commissioner Amy Jacobs, Elisabetta Kasfir, Craig Detweiler, Reg Griffin, Ray Higgins, Kristie Lewis, Ira Sudman, Kristin Bernhard, Susan Adams, Pam Stevens, Carol Hartman, Rian Ringsrud, Woody Dover, Jennie Couture, Jackie Shivers, Nia King, Alexandria Williams, Shayna Funke, Ani Whitmore, Quandra Collins, William Cox, Faith Duncan, Shamira Champion, Sara Tinsley, Liz Young, Ben Appling, Lari Lyn Beyer, Bridgett Walker, Sonja Adams, Tamika Boone, and Nate Smith.

The May 10, 2018 meeting of the Board of Early Care and Learning opened with the approval of the day's agenda. The minutes from the February 15, 2017 board meeting were not approved. Inspiration was given by Victor Morgan.

Members of the board provided updates on their activities:

- Kathy Howell asked a public relations representative of the Carrollton City School System to write an article on Georgia's Pre-K for the 25<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration program. The article documents the origins of Georgia's Pre-K and Kindergarten and can be found in the Albany Herald.
- Susan Harper announced that Dougherty County School System received a literacy grant, which was announced in the local Albany paper. Ms. Harper worked on the associated committee and is proud of its work.

DECAL staff provided updates on their program areas:

- Ray Higgins, acting Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration, reported that DECAL is on track with its budget and fiscal expenditures. Mr. Higgins reported that several bills related to DECAL's goals have been passed (such as HB494, HB740, & SB336) in this past legislative session that streamline processes to improve child and classroom safety. Mr. Higgins stated that Falita Flowers and Sharon McPherson have left the agency to pursue new opportunities. Mr. Higgins announced that this will be his last board meeting before starting a new role in June. He thanked the board for their support and introduced Rian Ringsrud, who is transitioning to assume the role of Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration. Mr. Ringsrud stated his enthusiasm for his new role and thanked Ray Higgins for his leadership. Susan Harper thanked Ray for his service and welcomed Rian.
- Rian Ringsrud announced that there will be two directors of Nutrition Services taking the place of Falita Flowers; Tamika Boone as the Director Eligibility Services and Sonja Adams as the Director of Provider Services. He introduced Ben Appling as the new Director of Audits and Compliance.
- Elisabetta Kasfir, Assistant Commissioner for Federal Programs and Eligibility, discussed CAPS policy changes going into effect in July 2018 like the implementation of the six DECAL service regions. Also, families enrolled in a Quality Rated program will receive a 15% discount as an incentive to choose quality rated child care. A new method of calculating family fees will go into effect this September. It will be based on family income as it relates to the federal poverty levels. Ms. Kasfir announced that enrollment in an Associate degree program will be added as an approved activity for families applying for and receiving CAPS as of July 2018. DECAL will participate in a meeting with the Technical College System of Georgia and the University System of Georgia in July 2018 to build relationships and foster collaboration.

- Carrie Ashbee introduced and welcomed Sarah Tinsley as a new member of the DECAL Foundation. She asked the board members to follow their new social media accounts. Ms. Ashbee announced that they received a grant of \$650,000 from United Way to expand Quality Rated and continue their marketing campaign. The Foundation's full Board of Directors will be in place in conjunction with the forthcoming one year anniversary of the foundation. *Picnic Under the Pines: A Singer Songwriter Series* is a fundraiser that will be held in partnership with the Georgia Forestry Foundation to support children's literacy on October 13, 2018.
- Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner of Pre-K and Instructional Supports, discussed challenges in Infant Toddler care and reported administrative data which shows that Infant and Toddler classrooms have lower quality. Ms. Adams discussed the progress of the Early Language and Literacy (ELL) Grants program. Ms. Adams demonstrated how the LENA device works, presented a sample report, and explained the results. Susan Harper stated her enthusiasm for LENA and the story it tells about children's interactions. Ms. Adams announced that programs with the grant will continue in 2019, thanks to the Sandra Dunagan Deal GA Center for Early Language and Literacy, and she described a few refinements to the grant program. Ms. Adams introduced Dr. Sharona Fountain, the Director of The Learning Station, a center that participates in the ELL Grant. Dr. Fountain and her two colleagues expressed their gratitude for the grant and described how it has benefitted the staff and children at their center. Ms. Adams thanked Dr. Fountain and her colleagues for their hard work.
- Commissioner Amy Jacobs thanked Dr. Fountain and her colleagues for their input. She provided an update on the third year of the Pre-K teacher of the year program. Forty applications were received, six finalists have been chosen, and the winner will be announced in September. A new PSA was launched to promote <http://www.qualityrated.org> and 1-877-ALL- GA-KIDS. These services are provided in partnership with Quality Care for Children to help parents find summer camps & child care programs and to advise them on what questions to ask of programs before enrolling their children. Commissioner Jacobs played the PSA video. The Look Again Campaign has expanded its message beyond child care providers to include all caretakers of children to educate them on the consequences of leaving a child in a vehicle. There is an upcoming event to promote the campaign on Tuesday, May 29, 2018 with Governor Nathan Deal and first lady Sandra Deal. Commissioner Jacobs acknowledged the many role changes occurring within DECAL and specifically thanked Ray Higgins for his service.
- Kristie Lewis, Assistant Commissioner for Child Care Services, provided the exact number and types of visits to licensed and exempt facilities thus far in the 2018 fiscal year as well as current compliance statistics.
- Ira Sudman, Chief Legal Officer, discussed the Child Care and Development Fund State Plan (CCDF). A printed executive summary of the CCDF was provided for each attendee. Mr. Sudman referred to highlights for each section of the plan from this summary. Public hearings will be held for comments on the plan prior to submission. Comments can also be emailed to [ccdfstateplan@decalfga.gov](mailto:ccdfstateplan@decalfga.gov). The final submission deadline is July 1, 2018.
- Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner of System Reform, described the revamped content of Quality Rated's social media pages. Ms. Bernhard presented statistics on the percent of centers participating in Quality Rated and those that are rated and not rated. To encourage providers to enroll in Quality Rated, a bonus package will be offered to programs that are participating in Quality Rated by June 2018 in preparation to meet the 2020 deadline. Ms. Bernhard discussed the Child Care Business Resources Initiative with the purpose of promoting programs' usage of existing business development resources. A survey of licensed child care programs found that most respondents wanted additional training in some business area. Several organizations have been identified as potential partners that could provide business training and support for child care providers.

After lunch, Susan Harper opened the public hearing portion of the meeting. One person signed up for public comment, Ms. Wande Okunoren-Meadows. Ms. Okunoren-Meadows spoke separately for two organizations, Georgia Child Care Association (GCCA) and Little Ones Learning Center. Ms. Okunoren-Meadows' comments for GCCA included the following: She reminded the board that quality care is expensive and stated that the State is not funding at the optimal levels for quality child care. She urged the funding for tiered-reimbursement rates to be standardized. She also urged DECAL to continue serving as many CAPS children as possible rather than raising CAPS rates. GCCA is thankful for their partnership with DECAL. Ms. Okunoren-Meadows' comments for Little Ones Learning Center included the following: Several years ago, she received the Farm to Early Care and Learning program grant from DECAL, which is no longer offered. She stated that the program has many benefits, including supporting the local economy, encouraging kids

to eat healthy, increasing access to healthy foods, and promoting family engagement & professional development for teachers. She urges the board to consider funding this program again in the upcoming CCDF plan.

During lunch, board committees met. When the board reconvened, committee chairs gave their reports:

- Kathy Howell reported for the programs and rules committee that the criminal background check is now being coordinated with federal guidelines which poses problems for timely hiring an adequate number of child care workers. The Pre-K summer transition programs have added 20 new sites this year and there are three upcoming summer kickoff events to promote summer transition programs. The summer nutrition program had a 5% increase in food sponsors from last year. Ms. Howell stated there are many new staff members being trained within the CAPS division this year and that DECAL's administration is supporting these transitions.
- Victor Morgan reported for the budget and finance committee that DECAL's budget and expenditures are on track.
- Phil Davis reported for the System Reform committee that DECAL is submitting the noncompetitive continuation application to the Head Start office in order to be granted an additional five years with the program. Quality Rated staff are conducting reliability visits with providers. A webinar is being developed for Quality Rated participants. System Reform is making these processes easier for their customers. Quality Rated subsidy grants are being disbursed to 2,500 slots as of July 1, 2018. On-site eligibility is available for families so they can apply directly at their child care centers. System reform is working with "mommy bloggers" to improve their social media content.

Kristie Lewis stated that voting on Child Care Resource & Referral rules will occur at the next meeting. The board will also need to approve next year's budget at the next board meeting. Ms. Harper announced Dawn Henderson has resigned from the board.

The next meeting of the board will take place August 16, 2018.

Board Chair Susan Harper adjourned the meeting at 1:28 p.m.