

SOUTH CAROLINA



**Early Childhood Advisory Council Meeting
February 21, 2019
2:00 PM
IT-ology
1301 Gervais St #200, Columbia, SC 29201**

MINUTES

Members Present (15):

Chip Stanley, Chair
Julie Hussey, Vice Chair
Senator Greg Hembree
Senator Gerald Malloy
Representative Jerry Govan
Josh Baker (Phone)
Shelley Canright
Mary Lynne Diggs
Tim Holt
David Mathis
Jennifer McConnell
Mary Poole
Roger Pryor (Phone)
Amy Williams
Sue Williams

Members Absent (4):

Representative Rita Allison
Angel Johnson-Brebner
Walter Fleming Jr.
Joan Meacham
Alexia Newman

Others Present:

Georgia Mjartan	Mary Anne Mathews
Zack Catoe	Porlan Cunningham
Bridgett Shealey	Jonathan Artz
Martha Strickland	Dorothy Priester
Debbie Robertson	Jim Riddle
Mark Barnes	Lillian Peake
Betty Gardiner	
Cassie Barber	
Lavinia Tejada	



Ms. Julie Hussey called the meeting to order at 2:04 PM and introduced the room to Mr. Chip Stanley who was recently appointed by Governor Henry McMaster to be his designee as the Chairman of the Board. Each board member then introduced themselves to Mr. Stanley while providing a brief summary of their background as it relates to the early childhood field, and a glimpse into the work they may be doing personally or as an organization.

Ms. Georgia Mjartan introduced two new SC First Steps staff members: Ms. Porlan Cunningham, Communications Director, and Ms. Beth Moore, Local Partnership Communications Coordinator. Ms. Mjartan briefly highlighted the previous work and achievements of the new employees and acknowledged how their skill sets will aid the agency in closing the gaps for 4K enrollment, improving communications between local partnerships and community supporters, and provide enhanced public transparency as an organization. Ms. Mjartan also added that these new staff members, along with the organization, Mad Monkey, will be instrumental in the development of a new website that will support the efforts of SC First Steps and the ECAC.

Ms. Hussey stated that a quorum was present and called for a motion to approve the agenda as submitted for the meeting; with a second from Senator Greg Hembree, the agenda was approved unanimously.

The meeting opened for public comment. No members of the public present wished to speak.

Ms. Hussey next called for a motion to approve the minutes from the December 7, 2018 meeting. Mr. Tim Holt made a motion to accept the minutes from the December meeting and Dr. Shelley Canright seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Dr. David Mathis was welcomed to the floor and provided the board with a report from the Interagency Collaboration Committee. Dr. Mathis commented that the group is now formally organized and noted that the committee has chosen to take a collaborative focus on the data housed at each organization and further commented on how this information can strongly advise future decisions.

Ms. Cassie Barber, Program Manager for the Early Childhood Advisory Council, was introduced and provided an update on the \$3.5 million Preschool Development Grant, Birth through Five (PDG), that was awarded to South Carolina. For this grant, the Department of Social Services will be the lead agency and SC First Steps will receive \$1.5 million in funding. A handout was provided to the board which outlined the top ten projected outcomes for the SC Preschool Development Grant by February 2020. Ms. Barber also announced that a one-month extension in grant proceedings is expected due to delays in

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the federal process. Ms. Barber also noted that all states receiving a grant were required to amend their budgets in order to account for a 29% reduction in grant funds.

As part of Ms. Barber's presentation, it was reported that there will be a comprehensive needs assessment completed on South Carolina's entire Early Childhood system which will focus on Early Care and Education, Health and Wellbeing, and Family and Community. The Research Evaluation and Measurement (REM) team at the University of South Carolina Education Policy Center has been contracted along with Clemson University, College of Charleston, and Francis Marion University to conduct regional work. SC First Steps Local Partnerships and Head Start are enlisted to provide a local perspective. The goal is to collect comprehensive data from local, regional, and state levels from all who are involved in early childhood service delivery. Regional meetings will be held in March, April, and May and will be based on the Harwood Institute's Community Conversations. There will be guides to do surveys, interviews, and focus groups to attain and develop consistent information across the populations.

The data collected from this needs assessment will be used to develop a comprehensive Birth through Five strategic plan. Ms. Peggy Ball of the Build Early Childhood Initiative will be the point person responsible for assembling this information collected from the regional meetings.

In the next item, Ms. Barber revealed plans to review and renovate the SC First Steps Outcomes and Accountability Database. Ms. Barber further eludes to a recent meeting with information technology professionals at the S.C. Department of Education and discussed plans to acquire a Data Systems Analyst that can design an ideal database to measure desired outcomes for the Local Partnership and 4K teams. This position would be a funded by the Preschool Development Grant.

Ms. Mjartan reiterated the concept that the grant funding is for the analysis and development of the database and funding for implementation will be requested from the state legislature.

Ms. Barber continued her presentation by discussing the integration of the early childhood data system. The goal for the next year would be to develop a scope to include a governance structure and protocols for sharing of data between and among agencies. Through the PDG, the Department of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs is hiring a Business Analyst and a Statistician to help coordinate a needs assessment of network participation.

With the data system in mind; Ms. Hussey, Ms. Mjartan, and Ms. Barber shared some reflective thoughts from their recent trip to the state of Georgia where they enjoyed the opportunity to view a highly effective state-wide portal for early childhood services and discussed collaborative opportunities with South Carolina's Early Childhood stakeholders



participating on the trip. The Georgia web portal will act as inspiration for what the ECAC would like to see implemented in South Carolina.

Ms. Barber next discussed the need for smoother transitions for children. Ms. Barber's discussed examples like transitioning from IDEA Part C to IDEA Part B services and well as encouraging partners to use proven programs such as Pyramid Model or Countdown to Kindergarten among other programs. Ms. Barber elaborated that smoother transitions could provide more training opportunities for instructors, demonstrate the value of Pre-K to schools, and integrate these programs in at least 50% of communities statewide.

Ms. Barber noted that the web presence for SC First Steps and the Early Childhood Advisory Council is currently minimal; however, new websites will be developed along with a web portal to serve as an all-encompassing resource that includes a SC Pre-K portal, a collaborative network of all Pre-K programs statewide. The new website will also contain active links to provide information about all ECAC agencies and their early childhood programs available to help families across the state.

In discussing the subject of best practices, Ms. Barber describes the idea of a summer professional development academy open to all pre-k teachers in the state of South Carolina. Ms. Barber mentioned that during this academy Conscious Discipline would be offered to every practicing pre-k teacher, as well as training by the Children's Trust staff on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Additionally, there would be many opportunities for professional development in the coming months across numerous programs.

Ms. Barber next provided confirmation that the Federal Government administering the grant does not require an evaluation on the first year of the grant; however, SC First Steps has decided to conduct an evaluation. Ms. Barber noted that the evaluation would serve to ensure that the work through the PDG is headed in the right direction now and in the coming years. Only half of the states awarded this grant in 2019 will be funded with a continuation grant and the goal is to be as competitive as possible for these grants in years two through four. An evaluation of the program could immensely improve the chances of qualifying for funding in subsequent years.

Ms. Barber closed her presentation by speaking about the joint Pre-K outreach and collaboration among agencies. She highlighted the need for "System-Navigators" within each stage of the early childhood process to help direct parents and families to the most appropriate and beneficial program for them. Lastly, Ms. Barber applauded the "No Wrong Door" approach the ECAC has adopted and expressed the benefits of working together to provide a mixed-delivery service to the families of the state.

Following the close of Ms. Barber's presentation, Ms. Sue Williams mentioned the upcoming South Carolina Child Well-Being Coalition and stated that most people are confused by all the coalitions and that there needs to be a way to offer information of all services available

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to families. Ms. Williams also mentioned that there is a company called “Aunt Bertha” which is a web-based data system that connects people to all services in an area by searching with a zip code. The website, AuntBertha.com, is a free service that is available to the public now and updated on a weekly basis. It was created to help offer services for all families. Ms. Williams stated that it would be wonderful to have a similar program like this available for families in South Carolina.

Ms. Mjartan thanked Ms. Barber for her presentation and stated that as this grant unfolds, she would like to see this Board take ownership of this collective work. Ms. Mjartan shared her feelings of encouragement following the work of the Interagency Collaboration Committee, and she identified that the ECAC is ready to adopt two new sub-committees: an Outreach and Engagement Subcommittee to aid in the creation of web portals and develop the collective identity of the ECAC moving forward and a Data Governance Subcommittee comprised of all agency heads and selected data professionals in order to develop a plan on how data should be shared to support the work of the ECAC.

Dr. David Mathis emphasized the importance of the Data Governance Subcommittee and having personnel who work with data join the subcommittee in order to utilize such information in the best way possible.

Ms. Sue Williams identified the work of SC Kids Count as a similar resource that includes all of the data housed at the state agencies.

Ms. Mjartan elaborated on the topic of data governance and how resources are currently used to provide context on early childhood programs; however, these programs do not have the ability to openly share data as each agency has its own individual agreements and legal requirements. The ECAC Data Governance Subcommittee would serve to structure and govern the data-sharing process while supplementing existing efforts.

Ms. Hussey reflected that the citizens of South Carolina want to see the agencies work together and emphasized the significance of working together in a collaborative effort instead of attempting to create a new cabinet or agency.

The Early Childhood Advisory Council meeting was adjourned at 2:58 PM by Ms. Julie Hussey.