



Minutes

Program Policy & Strategy Committee Meeting
February 22, 2011; 3:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe
Board Room
2555 Ponce De Leon Blvd Suite 500
Coral Gables, FL 33134

Committee Attendees: The Hon. Cindy Lederman; Shaleen Fagundo; Ann Karen Weller (via conference call); Elizabeth Bezos; Roderick Beasley; Modesto Abety; Santiago Echemendia (Board Attorney)

Staff Attendees: Evelio Torres (CEO); Blythe Robinson; Tabatha Cullen, Jackye Russell; Sandra Gonzalez; Mary Williams (via conference call); Pamela Hollingsworth; Dr. Christine Hughes; Kristina Alonso; Leana Pena; Milton Silvera

General Attendees: Linda Carmona (AECE); Edith Humes-Newbold (Miami-Dade County); Maritza Alonso (Miami-Dade County); Bill De La Sierra (Kidworks USA); Jeff Hurst (Department of Children and Families); Ardene Estrada (Miami-Dade County); Marie Woodson (Miami-Dade County); Marla Alpizar (City of Hialeah); Dr. Demetrio Perez (Lincoln-Martí) (via conference call); Claudette Seymour-Lane (Department of Children and Families); Cyd Heyliger (MDCPS); Joann Farr (Miami-Dade County);

I. Welcome and Introductions

- C. Lederman welcomed the committee, staff and attendees.
- A quorum was established with five (5) voting members.

II. Approval of January 25th Minutes

- S. Fagundo moved to approve the January 25, 2011 minutes.
- R. Beasley seconded the motion.
- Motion was unanimously passed.

III. CEO Update

- E. Torres stated that the most pressing issue on the table is next year's budget. While there will not be a final budget until the session begins, there is good support of School Readiness (SR) in the Senate. However, we have met with individual members who have all expressed that we can expect a reduction to the SR budget. There was some discussion at the Senate Transportation and Tourism Economic Development Appropriations Committee last week where questions about VPK arose. Some expressed that VPK was akin to free babysitting. Two senators are trying to generate a constitutional amendment to make the VPK program income eligible. We are waiting to see if any bills that have an impact on early learning are introduced other than a consolidation bill that would move School Readiness and VPK to the Department of Education



(DOE) which is already in the works. The bill would consolidate all the functions into one, with the exception of licensing.

IV. Lincoln Marti

- C. Lederman introduced Dr. Demetrio Perez, Jr. of Lincoln Marti who attended via conference call.
- E. Torres stated that there were some concerns from committee members and contracted staff about having access to Lincoln-Marti sites.
- D. Perez, Jr. responded that Lincoln Marti is sensitive to the needs of the coalition and the services it provides. The intent is not to keep anyone out of the centers and Lincoln-Marti is more than willing to work with ELC to make sure access is given. The issue is that given the large number of different personnel that comes through the centers, Lincoln Marti has a policy that indicates that staff should stop and call if there is any doubt about the identity of an individual. Some of the contractors that visit the centers might not appreciate it so Lincoln Marti is willing to come up with a solution that would satisfy those needs.
- C. Lederman stated that sometimes safety is best preserved by letting staff and parents on site.
- E. Torres stated that the coalition will provide Lincoln Marti with a sample of coalition identification cards. E. Torres asked D. Perez, Jr. to distribute to his centers so that they are aware of what the identification looks like.
- D. Perez, Jr. stated that he would personally distribute to all of his centers.

V. City of Hialeah

- M. Alpizar, Director of Education and Community Services for the City of Hialeah, shared some concerns about the impact that policy changes might have on afterschool and summer camp programs operating in the city parks. The City of Hialeah currently operates 11 after school sites as well as 5 summer camp sites. The City of Hialeah is currently a license-exempt provider, whose facilities are not built to be childcare centers and have a staff to child ratio of 14:1. There are however, three employees who hold director credentials as well as several staff members who are certified teachers. M. Alpizar explained how this would affect children who receive SR services throughout the year that would normally attend one of City of Hialeah's summer camp programs. The licensing policy would cause children who attend a City of Hialeah summer program, to lose their eligibility, since School Readiness requires that they be enrolled in only approved centers. M. Alpizar asked the committee to reconsider the policy that would require their sites to be licensed in order to participate in the School Readiness program.
- M. Abety inquired about the Committee's legal ability to establish rules and policies that would exclude the City of Hialeah and other potentially high-quality programs.
- S. Echemendia responded that since coalitions are a statutorily created entity, the board only has the authority that is prescribed within the statutes of the program. It can be interpreted within the confines of the statutes, that they arguably have the authority to establish said exceptions.
- S. Fagundo stated that the licensing policy has already been put into place and the Board should be cautious about making exemptions. While the City of Hialeah may have certified individuals, there are other summer and afterschool programs that may have high school youth and other volunteers on their respective staffs.
- S. Echemendia added that the licensing policy, as it is, is legally sustainable.



- J. Russell stated that in reference to M. Alpizar’s statement about the City of Hialeah’s facilities not being designed to be child care centers, they are however, eligible to receive a school age license from the Department of Children and Families which differs from a child care facility license.

VI. Fourth Quarter Monitoring Report

- C. Garcia, partner at Goldstein, Schechter and Koch (GSK), presented highlights from the Fourth Quarter Monitoring report.
 - SR eligibility showed findings which included missing documentation, incomplete or incorrect income worksheets. Rights and Responsibility forms were not legible or properly completed and referral forms that were incomplete or incorrect in reporting hours of care or purpose of care.
 - There were no findings in regard to providing parents with information on the right to choose an approved provider and enroll child according to choice.
 - SR payment and financial management services showed a finding in regards to ensuring that required invoices, data and reports are delivered complete and on time that indicated that some attendance sign-in/sign-out forms were pre-filled.
 - There were no findings for fiscal monitoring of SR or VPK services, non-direct administrative expenses.
 - Resource and Referral services were deemed satisfactory.
 - VPK eligibility showed findings in regards to incomplete or incorrect parent registration forms as well as EFS client data and application variations and missing or incomplete documentation (i.e. birth certificates)
 - VPK provider eligibility showed findings in regards to provider agreements that were not properly completed as well as a missing Affidavit of Good Moral Character.
 - There were no findings with regards to provider payment processing for VPK.
 - There were no findings for compliance of Resource and Referral program requirements.
 - There were no findings for Wesley House, all areas.
- E. Torres stated that ELC staff did monitoring of subcontractors and there were no findings. The coalition uses the same tool as GSK to conduct its monitoring.

VII. Quality Counts Report

- P. Hollingsworth presented the Quality Counts Report.
 - 134 programs in the Quality Counts program have received a baseline rating, as well as at least one star rating. The majority of the baseline ratings fell in the 1, 2 and 3-star rating categories with very few providers falling into the 4 and 5-star categories.
 - Over the course of three years in the program, there have been significant gains and now the majority of providers fall into the 3 and 4-star categories and 7 new providers earned a 5-star rating.
 - 80% of programs who initially received a baseline rating of one star and 78% of 2-star programs have increased at least one star level. 48% of 3-star programs increased at least one star level.



- On the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) there were gains in the areas of activities, listening and talking, program structure and space and furnishing.
- M. Abety asked how we can improve the consistently low rates in the area of personal care.
- P. Hollingsworth responded that the changing of ECERS hand washing guidelines is the essence of the struggle with this area. On the positive side, there is much more hand washing taking place. However, the washing of hands according to the criteria set forth is extremely challenging. The first year of Quality Counts, it was believed that hand washing could be perfected in a year, but there were disappointing results. Hand washing became less of the conversation and the program justifiably turned its attention to areas that matter most. Hand washing is still a focus but we are trying to find other ways to reach the providers with this issue.
- S. Fagundo stated that her center is now a participant of Quality Counts. S. Fagundo praised all of the Quality Counts contractors by saying that all interaction with them has been thoughtful, purposeful, and respectful and they have seemed very excited to help the center improve.

VIII. Child Safety Licensing Policy

- J. Russell stated that a subcommittee workgroup attended by S. Fagundo and L. Piñeiro, board members, met to discuss drafting different language into the Child Safety Licensing Policy. The current policy sets out to suspend providers with one Class I and two Class II violations in a twelve-month period. DCF licensing representatives attended the meeting and explained the process of licensing inspections. The workgroup discussed comparisons between the DCF licensing policy and the current Child Safety Licensing Policy. J. Russell presented a table comparing the DCF and ELC policies which outlined the frequency of violations and their respective resulting sanctions.
- S. Echemendia stated that the committee discussed recommending a motion to have two repeat Class II violations within the same sub-standard.
- S. Fagundo stated that the workgroup was very productive. The exercise of going through the standards was a dynamic discussion. There have been concerns whether some of the sub-standards could jeopardize the health of a child. A lot of these standards can be instances that are a one-time occurrence by a teacher. For instance, if a teacher commits a Class I violation, she would be fired at that moment. However, the owner or director would be the responsible party with a violation on record and in danger of potentially losing a license or School Readiness funding while the teacher is free to work at another center. The current Child Safety Licensing Policy would take action directly on the owner. Even centers who are striving for high quality, if an inspector looked hard enough, could be given two Class II violations. Then a center would lose its funding and result in an upheaval of children who are in a safe, quality center to a center that potentially might not have the same level of quality. The current policy also does include progressive enforcement.
- S. Fagundo stated that the workgroup recommends that the policy be more aligned with DCF in terms of fines and enforcement. S. Fagundo also recommended that the full Board review the standards and their respective real-life implications.
- E. Torres stated that once the coalition begins to consider imposing fines for violations, it takes on the role of a regulatory agency which is not what the



coalition is intended to be. It would require a very complex and expensive administrative structure as well as additional liability.

- E. Bezos suggested that the committee go forward with a policy that states two violations in the same substandard would result in the suspension of School Readiness. Once the provider goes through the appeal process with DCF and the violation is validated, then the ELC should move forward with suspension of School Readiness funding.
- S. Echemendia clarified that the current policy does not specifically state that the two violations would need to be in the same substandard. The current policy also does not defer to DCF nor wait for the licensing appeal process.
- E. Bezos suggested that the language in the policy be changed to state that School Readiness funding *may be* as opposed to *will* be suspended.
- S. Echemendia stated that changing the language would render it arbitrary. Leaving the language in the policy as is would still allow the provider to go through the ELC grievance process and be potentially exonerated by the committee.
- J. Russell reminded the committee that this change in language does not address those providers that are not regulated by DCF.
- R. Beasley moved to leave the current policy, with regards to Class I violations, as is and to change the policy, with regards to Class II violations, to three Class II violations in a one year period resulting in a one year suspension of School Readiness funding.
 - A. K. Weller seconded the motion
- S. Fagundo moved to amend the motion to reflect a six month suspension as opposed to a one year suspension of School Readiness funding for both Class I and II violations
- At the suggestion of R. Beasley, S. Fagundo modified the amendment to the motion to state that one Class I violation in a one year period would result in a suspension of up to one year, and 3 Class II violations of the same substandard in a one year period would result in suspension of up to six months.
 - M. Abety seconded the amended motion
 - Motion was unanimously passed.

IX. Enrollment Update

- E. Humes stated that around October, in an effort to be cautious about the budget, the enrollment target for School Readiness was lowered in order to ensure that the budget was not overextended. Managed enrollment efforts began in December. Between December and the first week of February there were close to 3,500 children enrolled. We have now reached our target and should now come very close to our budget parameters by the end of the fiscal year.

X. 2010-2011 Sliding Fee Scale

- J. Russell presented the updated Sliding Fee Scales for Miami-Dade County and Monroe counties.

XI. Public Comment

- B. De La Sierra stated that he represents 319 schools in Miami-Dade County; 246 of them accredited. One of his organization's schools in Palm Beach County, who had been in business for years and was an accredited center, had an incident where a child decided to stay on the bus that they use to transport children to afterschool care and hide. The driver did not see the child and proceeded to go to another school to pick up more children. The mother of the child was



contacted and informed of the occurrence. The mother admitted that her child does things like that and told the center not to worry. While the director did not self-report the incident, someone at the center did and the center was given a Class I violation as a result, and subsequently lost its Gold Seal status. There are many instances beyond a provider's control that can occur. Echoing S. Fagundo's statement about a teacher committing an error that results in a Class I violation, the teacher would be free to gain employment elsewhere but the provider is the one who is penalized. Suspending School Readiness funding could potentially take away the provider's ability to earn a living. While the policy has great intentions, given the purpose of improving safety and quality, he is concerned that it may put good centers out of business.

- L. Carmona asked for clarification on the sliding fee scale. The block grant allows eligibility to be based on the 85% of the median income for the state. The sliding fee scale uses the poverty level, which is quite different. Does this new sliding fee scale affect the parent copayment or provider reimbursement, and if so, what is the economic impact to the budget?
- J. Russell clarified that the reimbursement rate and the parent fees are not changing. The change lies in the poverty level criteria so that now more families are eligible to apply.
- E. Torres added that we can expect more families to be on the waitlist because of the new income criteria.

XII. Adjourn.

- C. Lederman adjourned the meeting.