



# Minutes

Program Policy & Strategy Committee Meeting  
March 22, 2010; 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 S. Lederman, Co-Chair; Dr. Silvia La Villa; Lucy Piñeiro; Ramiro Moreno (via conference call); Jacqui Colyer (via conference call); Ann Karen Weller (via conference call); Santiago Echemendia, Board Attorney

**Staff Attendees:** Evelio Torres (President/CEO), via conference call; Blythe Robinson; Angelo Parrino; Tabatha Cullen; Sandra Gonzalez; Nicole Bardin; Pamela Hollingsworth; Jackye Russell; Roseline Philippe; Bethany Sands; Melody Thelwell; Karen Molinaro; Yvette Medina; Ana Rodriguez; Mary Williams, via conference call; Kristina Alonso; Leeana Pena

**General Attendees:** Lea Stone (UM-/Mailman); Susan Gold (UM/Mailman); Rosalyn Laney (UM/Mailman); Blynda Murray (UM/Mailman); Kim Roy (MDCPS Office of Early Childhood); Arleen Lambert (SFHCCA); Joanne Palenzuela (UM/Mailman); Marlene Colon (UM/Mailman); Maria Luaces (UM/Mailman); Alison Gonzalez (FIU); Dr. Gail Gregg (FIU); Ian Fleury (DCF); Leslie Trice (TAPP); Marcy Polk (TAPP); Pierre Rutledge (TAPP); Daisy Hensley (Miami-Dade County); Linda Carmona (AECE); Edith Humes-Newbold (Miami-Dade County); Maria Elena Delgado (AECE); Jane Lindley (AECE); Claudia Arias (DCF); Marie Woodson (Miami-Dade County); Gretchen Williams (MDCPS)

<b>I. Welcome and Introductions</b>	<b>The Hon. Cindy S. Lederman Co-Chair</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ C. Lederman welcomed the committee, staff and attendees.</li><li>▪ A quorum was established with four (4) voting members.</li></ul>	
<b>II. Approval of Agenda</b>	<b>The Hon. Cindy S. Lederman Co-Chair</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ C. Lederman approved the agenda.</li></ul>	
<b>III. Approval Feb 22<sup>nd</sup> Minutes</b>	<b>The Hon. Cindy S. Lederman Co-Chair</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ C. Lederman called for the approval of the meeting minutes from February 22<sup>nd</sup>.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ L. Piñeiro moved to approve the minutes from the February 22<sup>nd</sup> Program Policy and Strategy Committee meeting.</li><li>○ Motion was seconded by A. K. Weller.</li><li>○ Motion was unanimously passed.</li></ul></li></ul>	



#### IV. CEO Update

Evelio Torres, CEO

- E. Torres stated that the bigger concern right now is the VPK budget.
  - There is a proposal to reduce the VPK base student allocation by approximately 15%.
  - Representative Flores is going to propose an amendment to the appropriation which would take us back up to the current rate minus 1%.
  - The other significant concern is the bill that proposes to increase VPK class size from 10 students to 12 students with one teacher and from 18 to 24 students with 2 teachers. It is important, for quality, to keep the class sizes as low as possible.
- E. Torres stated that there is another bill causing concern which was filed by Representative Nelson in the house.
  - This is a comprehensive early learning bill containing a large number of provisions. The main concern is the limiting of the ability of local communities to design early learning systems of care that work best for each individual community. The language was originally stricken but is now being put back into the bill which is a good thing.
- E. Torres stated that we are now working together with the Florida Children's Services Council on legislation that was introduced. The legislation is damaging to the Children's Trust and other children's councils in the state. It requires that they be placed under the county commission to go through the reauthorization process again.

#### V. Quality Programs RFP's

Evelio Torres, CEO  
Melody Thelwell

- E. Torres explained the Request for Proposal (RFP) process for Quality Programs.
  - We received proposals and established an evaluation team who met and made a recommendation based on the source presented by the contracts department.
  - The recommendation was made to the Finance Committee Meeting where it was accepted.
  - However, there was some concern that one of the evaluators had scored one of the areas lower than the other evaluators. A request was made for this discussion to come back to the Program and Strategy meeting, in order to be certain that the right recommendation was being made to the board.
- E. Torres introduced the Board Attorney, Santiago Echemendia.
- S. Echemendia discussed the details of the procurement process.
  - Melody Thelwell was overseeing the process.
  - The requests for proposals were advertised December 14, 2009, The notices of intent to submit the applications were to be received no later than December 28, 2009. The inquiries were received before January 4<sup>th</sup>. The coalition's response to the inquiries were due January 11<sup>th</sup>. The applications were received by the January 19<sup>th</sup> deadline. The initial opening of the applications took place on January 21<sup>st</sup>.
  - The first meeting of the evaluation committee took place on January 22<sup>nd</sup> where M. Thelwell walked the evaluators through the rules of the process. She explained the cone of silence and the conflict form which all five evaluators signed. She explained the RFP rankings and relevant scores.
  - The evaluation committee then did their rankings which were submitted to staff who compiled the information. The evaluation committee met again to look at the results of the rankings and total scores.
  - S. Echemendia stated that he was present at the initial meeting where the conflict forms were signed and where they were briefed in regards to the cone of silence and the Sunshine Law. He was also present at the subsequent meeting where the rankings were looked at, a robust discussion was held and additional



information requested from the Evaluation Committee was discussed and inquiries were addressed. The committee forwarded their ranking recommendations to the Finance Committee and ultimately to the Board.

- At the Finance Committee meeting there was some discussion regarding two of the evaluators giving rankings of zero in some instances. The Chairman articulated a concern regarding the possibility of a zero score.
- S. Echemendia noted that as long as the scores were between 0 and 10, they were within the legalities of the process. He also stated that it is not unusual for a ranking committee member to give a score of zero. Therefore, upon his being briefed on what had transpired at the Finance Committee meeting, his recommendation to the executive staff was that because it was an RFP the coalition has a few options:
  - The coalition could throw out all of the proposals based on what is in the best interest of the coalition.
  - The coalition could select the second ranked proposer if there is something that is articulated on the record by the Executive Committee and/or the Finance Committee that proves that there is a reason for going with a second recommended bidder, based on the scores being very close or other articulated reasons that would be in the best interest of the coalition.
- S. La Villa expressed the following concerns:
  - Finance makes the final conclusions on the process without bringing it before the Program and Strategy Committee on issues that affects providers.
  - In one instance, there were two bidders that came in extremely close. S. La Villa asked which questions were raised at the three Evaluation Committee meetings that took place and wanted to know if anyone raised any red flags.
- S. Echemendia responded that the first meeting was only introductory. At another of the committee meetings, Family Central did have a representative present. Since this was a public meeting and not a public hearing, there was no advocacy nor clarification on the part of the representative of Family Central.
- S. La Villa asked M. Thelwell to elaborate on any questions asked during the second meeting of the Evaluation Committee.
- M. Thelwell responded with the questions raised to Family Central.
  - The first question was regarding technical assistance in regards to accreditation numbers for 2008-2009 as well as present.
  - The number of centers who had progressed through the star rating system was also requested.
  - They also asked for clarification regarding the staffing plan and whether or not having one manager for both family child care homes as well as center based programs was doable.
- M. Thelwell also stated the questions asked of United Way.
  - United Way was asked to share their current training calendar, how many trainings have been completed from July 2009 through the present, and who attended.
  - Within the proposal UW states that 1000 providers received trainings. Clarification was requested on whether or not there were duplicates in this number.
  - Clarification was also requested on the position of a database accreditation consultant in the proposal.
  - These questions were directed at only the 3<sup>rd</sup> portion of the RFP which was for training only.
- S. La Villa asked if any questions were raised about the past performance of standing providers to which M. Thelwell replied that no questions had been raised on that topic.



- S. La Villa also asked if anyone questioned why Florida International University received a zero for the ability to demonstrate the ability to deliver services to diverse participants to which M. Thelwell replied that no questions had been raised.
- S. La Villa asked, in regards to RFP-05 (*provides technical assistance for family childcare providers*), who is the existing provider for this service. The provider in question was University of Miami. She further questioned how a provider such as University of Miami could receive a zero if they are the individuals who are currently providing this service.
- S. Echemendia responded that the process is considered legally sound. The issue went to the Board, Dr. La Villa raised some concerns and the Board deferred to the Program and Strategy Committee for further discussion. In his legal opinion, the process is not flawed. S. Echemendia suggested that as a matter of policy going forward, not relative to this precise RFP, the coalition would consider adopting a policy similar to the one Miami-Dade county is implementing for its procurement process. The County is looking at going to an ordinal ranking system where they would drop the highest and lowest score of each ranking member to address the subjectivity of issues like the one being raised. It would balance or do away with extreme numbers in individual members rankings, therefore removing more of the subjective nature of the evaluation process.
- C. Lederman stated that without a motion brought forth by a voting member of the committee the resolution would be moved to the board as is without the existing recommendations. C. Lederman noted S. La Villa's objection.
- S. La Villa added that with a coalition that is really concerned with quality and has invested 1.5 million dollars in quality it is troubling that she is the only one raising questions about this process. She will bring this issue before the full Board. S. La Villa also requested that M. Thelwell provide her with the selection process for the evaluators as well as the minutes from the January 22<sup>nd</sup> and February 12<sup>th</sup> meetings.

<b>VI. Monroe Update</b>	<b>Mary Williams</b>
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- M. Williams presented highlights from the Monroe County Performance Report.
  - Developmental screenings are on target however the timeliness of completion is at 68% due to training and technical issues.
  - The Pre-assessment period was September through November. 55% of the target has been reached due to late returns and non-returns from the providers.
  - The initial round of Child Health screenings has been completed and reached 77% of target. There will be a follow-up screening in the spring for new children and any children that were missed in the first round.
  - 100% of VPK providers have been monitored.
  - The target of a 5% increase in VPK enrollment has been exceeded.

<b>VII. Miami-Dade Update</b>	<b>Jackye Russell</b>
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- J. Russell presented the highlights of the Miami-Dade Performance Report.
  - 12,492 Ages and Stages screenings have been completed, year-to-date.
  - 1362 children have confirmed red flags and will receive or have received an Individual Improvement Plan (IIP).
  - There have been 63 referrals to Early Steps, 38 to FDLRS, 37 with behavioral issues and 115 other referrals for issues such as speech problems.
  - 27,093 children are enrolled in care.
  - 802 children are enrolled in the Child Care Executive Partnership Program (CCEP) to date.



- Currently there are 459 providers participating in the Quality Counts Program, 410 of which have received baseline ratings and 371 are on a Quality Improvement Plan.
- There are 31,748 children on the School Readiness waitlist of which 26,755 are ages birth through 8.

## VIII. Child Enrichment Providers

Jackye Russell

- J. Russell addressed the Child Enrichment provider issue that was brought up at the last Provider Services meeting.
  - Child Enrichment providers are those that offer something other than what is typically considered school readiness services such as karate, boxing, music, etc. They are generally after school programs and are license exempt.
  - The concern from the early care and education school readiness providers is that child enrichment providers are receiving the same reimbursement that they receive and they feel that child enrichment providers are providing a lesser service.
  - The discussion has been whether the coalition will continue to fund those providers and if so, whether or not there will be additional requirements added for them, In the previous year, they were not required to have a level 2 background screening. Going forward with the new provider agreement, it will become a requirement that their employees are background screened before they are allowed to work with children and will also need to provide a copy of their daily schedule.
- L. Piñero asked whether the coalition provides supplemental dollars to these providers or are all of their costs covered.
- J. Russell responded that the reimbursement is the same as other providers, based on their rates not exceeding the coalition's maximum reimbursement rate.
- L. Piñero requested a breakdown of which child enrichment providers are receiving additional funding (i.e., funds from Children's Trust) in addition to School Readiness dollars.
- L. Pineiro asked when the level 2 screening requirement will be effective and who will be required to submit to it.
- J. Russell responded that as of July 1, 2010 all employees of providers receiving school readiness funding that have any interaction with children will be required to have a level 2 background screening.
- L. Piñero asked how the performance of child enrichment providers is evaluated and what the requirements of the provider agreement they must comply with are.
- J. Russell responded that the Quality Assurance unit at the coalition and a private agency go out to monitor these providers. They are required to have a safe and healthy environment, they must comply with all laws and federal rules and regulations. Because they typically serve children who are five and older they are not required to comply with any curriculum requirements.
- L. Piñero asked why the coalition decided to fund this particular class of providers.
- J. Russell responded that because parents choose to take their children to these providers, respecting parental choice, the coalition funds these providers.
- L. Piñero asked who verifies whether or not the people running these programs such as karate possess the credentials to do so.
- J. Russell indicated that they are required to comply with the requirements of the provider agreement and would need an exemption letter from the Department of Children and Families. There is no requirement to make sure they have passed a certification to provider karate. The provider would then be monitored to insure that they meet the requirements of the provider agreement and provide a healthy and safe environment.



- L. Pineiro moved to have the Executive Committee address the following issues in regards to Child Enrichment Providers:
  - Safety issues associated with the lack of Level 2 background screenings for employees of these sites.
  - The educational component of these services without a method of measuring the services.
  - The issue addressing that anyone can open an enrichment program with little or no documentation of credentials to provide services.
  - How payment for these services fall within our mission particularly at a time when we have a significant amount of children on the waitlist for other services.
  - Whether or not they receive additional funding from other sources.
- \*Motion was amended to reflect that this will be discussed at the next Program Policy and Strategy meeting instead.
- Amended motion was seconded by J. Colyer.
- Motion was unanimously passed.
- M. Williams added that at the last Monroe county provider services committee meeting there were two enrichment providers, YMCA and Boys and Girls Club, in attendance that noted that the situation in the Keys was somewhat different in that there are very few options for after school and summer care so it is critical that options exist for parents. The school district cannot provide for all of these children so these options need to be available so that children are not going home alone.
- S. La Villa asked for the number of hours of services that these are providing.
- C. Lederman stated that this will be added to the next agenda for further discussion.
- J. Colyer requested further clarification of the term "license exempt" from Ian Fleury of the Department of Children and Families.
- I. Fleury stated that since the legislative session of January 13<sup>th</sup>, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is trying to move away from the term "license exempt." There is no such thing as an exemption from licensure. DCF is determining a standard format for individuals who do not meet the requirement for a license. DCF will issue a standard letter once they have submitted their request for the exemption. They will no longer issue a closure date or a one-year letter, but providers are required to submit a form and advise DCF whether there are any changes with their program so that it can be determined whether that status will continue or whether they will be required to be licensed. As it stands there are 4 items that can be considered when determining that a license is not needed. They cannot provide services beyond 4 hours a day. If they are operating on Miami-Dade county public school property and have a signed agreement with them, DCF will not require a license. Programs must be instructional/tutorial in nature (i.e., karate, ballet, music, etc.). They may not serve food that requires refrigeration.
- L. Piñeiro moved that in the event that the pending background screening bill passes, child enrichment providers be put on notice that they will be required to submit to a level 2 background screening.
- Motion was seconded by J. Colyer
- Motion was unanimously passed.

## IX. TAPP Program

Jackye Russell

- J. Russell presented the breakdown of the number of slots available in accredited centers near where the teenage parents either attend school or live that serve children birth through three years old. There are currently a total of 2,831 available slots in accredited centers. At this time the majority of the children enrolled in the program are attending non-accredited centers.



- J. Russell stated that the coalition is waiting on the funder, Miami-Dade County Public School (MDCPS), for direction on how they would like to handle moving these children into accredited centers.
- Pierre Rutledge of MDCPS' TAPP program introduced himself.
- P. Rutledge stated that MDCPS understands the hope is that every child is in an accredited program. However, the state statute which governs what the program does clearly states that children from zero to three only have to be in a licensed day care center.
  - This statute is built around parental choice. The TAPP Program is a dropout prevention program trying to not place barriers in front of these teenage parents whose. The ultimate goal is to make sure these parents have the opportunity to graduate from high school.
  - There is a list of day care centers that is given to the parent. The program cannot tell a parent which center to select. The program is open to accredited centers.
- C. Lederman stated that last year the TAPP program did send parents to accredited centers, as per the contract requirements.
- L. Rutledge indicated that the contract was changed because of the barriers it presented.
- C. Lederman stated that the Board has already voted to require accredited day care for children in the program and at the last meeting the school board gave full support and expressed that it is a wonderful idea.
- P. Rutledge stated that when this requirement was in their contract they found in terms of barriers that many of the young ladies in the program would not continue their education because most of them will go to day care centers in their area that they are familiar with, have an association with their church, or that their parents have an affiliation with. Although many of these centers are not accredited it does not mean that they do not provide quality services. They are licensed which is a requirement of the state statute.
- C. Lederman moved to implement the requirement immediately. C. Lederman asked why this topic continues to be added to the agenda there are vacancies in accredited centers where the children live and when the Board has already voted on it and the school board has agreed to it.
- J. Russell responded that we have to have the guidance from the funder which is MDCPS.
- L. Piñeiro asked C. Lederman to define "immediately."
- S. Echemendia responded that the board passed a motion to implement accreditation within six months and it is now two months into the process.
- C. Lederman agreed to drop the motion and follow what the Board had already agreed on.

<b>X. Public Comment</b>	<b>The Hon. Cindy S. Lederman Co-Chair</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gretchen Williams, Administrative Director of School Operations, stated that there are some circumstances of parental choice as it relates to the program. The district has decided that accreditation is a good idea and they are looking forward to working with the coalition to accommodate this process. However, the feasibility and logistics will need to be worked out so that we do not disrupt the student, babies and all concerned. There is meeting taking place on Thursday March 25<sup>th</sup> which would be a better venue to discuss the logistics of this transition.</li> <li>▪ Dr. Susan Gold of the University of Miami Mailman Center for Child Development stated that they have been providing services for family child care in this community for over 10 years and have had funding from many different sources, in addition to</li> </ul> |  |
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the Early Learning Coalition, the United Way, the Dade Community Foundation and the Health Foundation of South Florida. It is in the best interest of this committee and the full board to question how they will award the contract for the next three years to provide services for family childcare. Dr. Gold also questioned if it is in the best interest of the coalition to change providers after all the time and money that has been invested in training the outstanding technical assistance who currently have a relationship with the providers they have been working with. She also questioned if this is in the best interest of the Coalition to decrease the number of partners who have contributed to making this community an outstanding example to the rest of the state and country because of all of the cooperation and collaboration that has been achieved.

- Maria Elena Delgado of the Alliance for Early Care and Education stated that she would like the board to take into consideration that the enrichment centers do not have to follow ratios as the licensed providers are required to follow, causing safety issues. There are no nutritional requirements. Their directors have no credentials. Their employees do not have the minimum 45 hour standard course required by DCF of licensed providers. M. Delgado also expressed that although they are providing dance, art, karate, there is no educational purpose and should not be using funds from a program called School Readiness.
- Linda Carmona suggested that J. Russell find out the ages of the children that are being red-flagged so that if they are in the VPK program there is not a lot of time left to conduct a FDLRS evaluation. L. Carmona stated that in regards to the TAPP program, while she supports accreditation as a measure of quality, it is not the only measure of quality. She is very concerned about the disruption this might cause to the children and the teen parents in the TAPP program. She is also concerned about the distinction being made that these children are considered at a greater risk than other children that are being served.
- Dr. Gail Gregg of Florida International University (FIU) expressed her concern for the evaluation process. There was no consideration for past performance or past audits. Universities are not allowed to hire professional grant writers so professors must make their own proposals describing their past performances. But evaluators did not take past performance into consideration. Dr. Gregg questions how FIU, a premier college of education earning accolades, is considered to not able to handle training the community. Dr. Gregg feels that the process should be weighted and expressed her disappointment for what she feels is a flawed process.
- In response to a motion for a rehearing of the evaluation process from L. Piñeiro, S. Echemendia stated that it has been to the Finance Committee and has been to the board and has come back for discussion on the RFP's. Dropping the highest and lowest scores is not possible since this would be considered a modification of the process. There was no motion to do anything else but send it back to the board because the process is legally sound. If there is a bidder who is disgruntled by the process, there is a procedure called a bid protest. Or the Board, in its discretion at the next meeting based on reservations, based on comments from Dr. La Villa could end up taking a different course of action including articulating what is in the best interest of the coalition.
- Amy Rutger of the United Way added that UM has never had any compliance issues.

**XI. Adjourn**

**The Hon. Cindy S. Lederman  
Co-Chair**

- Meeting was adjourned by C. Lederman.