



Minutes

Program Policy & Strategy Committee Meeting
March 27, 2012; 3:30 p.m.–5:30 p.m.
Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe
Board Room

Committee Attendees: The Hon. Cindy Lederman; David Williams, Jr.; Rick Beasley; Ann Karen Weller (via conference call); Modesto Abety; Elizabeth Bezos (via conference call)

Staff Attendees: Evelio Torres; Blythe Robinson; Jackye Russell; Mary Williams (via conference call); Kristina Alonso; Pam Hollingsworth; Milton Silvera; Karen Bolaños; Sandra Gonzalez

General Attendees: Nathasis Sonny (Miami-Dade County); Tracey Goodman-Rogers (Miami-Dade County); Carmen Gutierrez-Mesa (Miami-Dade County); Ardene Estrada (Miami-Dade County); Angela Messina (Miami-Dade County); Ian Fleury (DCF); Carlos Garcia (DCF); Brian Sheaffer (YMCA); Jamilet Diaz (YMCA); Linda Carmona (AECE); Yanin Gonzalez (GSK); Evelyn Jordan (Miami-Dade County); Barbara Thomas-Robinson (Miami-Dade County); Carlos Garcia (GSK)

I. Welcome and Introductions

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

II. Approval of November 29th and January 31st Minutes

- R. Beasley moved to approve the November 29th and January 31st
 - M. Abety seconded the motion
 - Motion was unanimously passed.

III. Monroe Performance Report

- M. Williams shared the highlights of the Monroe Performance Report.

IV. Miami-Dade Performance Report

- J. Russell shared the highlights of the Miami-Dade Performance Report.

V. Program Monitoring – GSK Quarterly Report

- C. Garcia of Goldman, Schechter and Koch shared the details of the third, fourth and first quarter monitoring report.
 - M. Abety asked why there were findings with the School Readiness child files and not the provider files.
 - A. Estrada responded that the client file has more than five times the information than a provider file. The eligibility process is a very complex one due to the guidelines that the state has set forth. Miami-Dade County is working very hard to improve on errors in eligibility services.



- C. Garcia stated that again, the pre-filled sign in/sign out sheets continue to be an issue.

VI. Accreditation

- E. Torres discussed information about accreditation.
 - Currently 453 providers in Miami-Dade County are accredited. 247 of those are APPLE accredited. 70 are NAEYC accredited.
 - The ELC needs to decide if it will continue to support APPLE/FACCM, despite their position against early learning coalitions during the Race to the Top application process. They believe that accreditation is already a good indicator of quality of child care programs. We believe that quality rating systems are a more independent approach to quality improvement. Our quality rating system is very popular with our providers. We have a waitlist with over 200 providers trying to get into the program.
 - At the next board meeting we will need to discuss how much we will continue to support the APPLE organization.
 - We have done side-by-side comparisons and believe that NAEYC standards are higher than APPLE's. We have recently purchased 100 APPLE kits to distribute to providers. Most providers are pursuing APPLE accreditation due to its lower cost and faster processing time.
- In response to D. William's question about how exactly accrediting agencies' benchmarks compare to our own, E. Bezos stated that if the accreditation standards are compared to the Quality Counts Star Rating System standards, NAEYC would fare highest at around a 5-star rating as opposed to APPLE or other agencies that would fare at around a 2.5-star rating.
- E. Torres added that we have a few challenges to work through. DCF is responsible for granting the authority for agencies to accredit providers. We have a tremendous drive to increase the number of accredited providers. We also encourage providers to become accredited because they receive a break on property taxes as well as a 20% premium on top of the regular School Readiness reimbursement rate.
- E. Torres asked if we want to focus our limited resources on continuing to support providers to become accredited or if we want to allocate these dollars differently.
- E. Bezos added that it is important to also remember that if a provider is already at the reimbursement cap, the 20% premium cannot exceed the cap, therefore making it a moot point.
- E. Torres added that another basic argument is that we are continuing to support, with hundreds of thousands of dollars, an organization that continues to diminish our ability to support providers in improving their quality and improving their businesses.
- E. Bezos stated that the strive for quality does not have to stop because we stop supporting one agency. Efforts can be better directed to another agency that can assist providers in receiving a higher reimbursement. We need to direct our efforts to legislation to help obtain funding.
- R. Beasley asked if it is our strategic goal to increase the number of accredited providers.
- E. Torres responded that while it is, the goal of the Board is also to improve quality. The fundamental question is if we should favor one particular accrediting agency over another.
- R. Beasley asked how we do we incentivize providers to become accredited.
- E. Torres stated that the incentive is that accreditation is a marketing tool for parents.



- E. Bezos stated that realistically, a provider such as hers, who serves a lower income population, would not be asked anything about accreditation by a parent. From a logistical standpoint, it is too expensive. Accreditation can cost upwards of \$1800 not including the costs associated with maintenance, materials, salaries, etc. E. Bezos recommends that the coalition concentrate its efforts on Quality Counts and QRIS. Monies for these programs are more easily accessible. When a provider is presented with resources and materials, it is more tangible in terms of improving quality versus an accrediting agency that may only visit once in year. It is more logical, efficient and practical to use a locally funded and implemented rating system.
- M. Abety stated that the issue with accreditation is how it correlates to quality assessment and Quality Counts, as an example of what we want to reward and what we want to see for all of our children. We are at a point where we have followed the State's inability to lead, rewarding accreditation for things that have no sense in terms of actually improving quality. If we are investing the people's money we want to convey to parents that when we encourage them to seek out high quality providers, we stand for something. That is a stamp of our approval. Our data, as we compare Quality Counts to accreditation by some of those agencies that the state designates as Gold Seal, clearly indicates to us that Gold Seal is not the highest standard. If we are going to continue the Quality Counts purpose, it is to transmit to parents the very qualities that Quality Counts rewards. There is a reason why we do not issue a star rating to a provider until after they have had an opportunity to improve. We give them a year to make good on efforts to correct and uplift quality. We would need to communicate to parents through community education and advertising which centers in their areas have proven to be a higher quality center. This will create a market-driven system that demonstrates to parents that for the same money, they have access to high quality child care.
- M. Abety moved to accept NAEYC, NAFCC and CDA-E accreditation.
 - R. Beasley seconded the motion
 - Motion was unanimously passed.

VII. Provider Terminations

- J. Russell reminded the committee of the Board policy that states that the ELC would not contract with providers that obtain one Class I or three Class II violations within a twelve-month period. As we begin to start accepting new contracts for School Readiness we are looking to see which providers have obtained Class I and Class II violations. Those providers will be receiving letters explaining that we will not contract with them.
- J. Russell shared a list of providers who received the above violations. It is important for the committee to be aware because these providers have the right to go through the grievance process and file an appeal. Those grievances will be heard by this committee, since both the Program and Strategy and Provider Services Committee will be merging.
- In response to M. Abety's request for clarification of the policy, J. Russell explained that if the provider obtains a Class I or three or more Class II violations in a twelve month period, the Coalition would notify them of an intent to suspend from the program.
- In response to D. Williams comment about what happens, in terms of continuing to operate, to providers that receive these violations, E. Torres explained the provider can legally continue to operate as long as they have a license through DCF.



- D. Williams asked for further clarification on what the time frames for curing these violations are.
 - I. Fleury of DCF responded that for Class II violations, the time frame is usually up to 10 days. Class I violations, depending on the seriousness can be required to correct immediately.
 - C. Garcia of DCF explained the progressive enforcement policy.
 - E. Torres added that a task force put together by the former Secretary of DCF which included a number of professionals throughout the state including childcare providers, delivered a very comprehensive report that addressed licensing standards in Florida, as well as potential improvements. DCF is limited as to what it is able to do in terms of enforcements. There has been no action on that report up until this day, and the task force has reminded the current DCF secretary that the report was delivered. He has agreed to review it and hopefully some action will be taken on it.

VIII. USDA Food Program

- J. Russell stated that the coalition has been given a directive by the Office of Early Learning that any providers who have been disqualified from the USDA food program will no longer be allowed to contract with School Readiness. We cannot give federal funds to individuals who have committed some type of fraud with this program.

VII. Committee Merger

- J. Russell stated that the Program Policy and Strategy Committee is merging with the Provider Services Committee. The Provider Services Committee usually meets four times a year, with two of the meetings taking place in Monroe County. All of the logistics in terms of location and schedule will need to be discussed. The calendar can be discussed at the next Program and Strategy Committee meeting in April.

VII. Public Comment

- L. Carmona stated that some of the issues with regards to pre-filled rosters are moot. Sometimes it is not in the control of the providers, as parents will pre-fill the sign in sheets on their own to avoid having to do it every day.

IX. Adjourn.

- D. Williams, Jr. adjourned the meeting.