



Program Policy & Strategy Committee Meeting  
July 26 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; David Williams, Jr. (via conference call); R. Beasley (via conference call); Modesto Abety; Jacqui Colyer; Ramiro Moreno (via conference call); Ann Karen Weller (via conference call)

**Staff Attendees:** Evelio Torres (CEO); Jackye Russell; Mary Williams (via conference call); Kristina Alonso; Milton Silvera; Leana Pena; Kerry Allen; Bethany Sands; Pamela Hollingsworth

**General Attendees:** Linda Carmona (AECE); Evelyn Jordan (Miami-Dade County); Jackie Romillo (Citrus Health Network); Edith Humes-Newbold (Miami-Dade County);

### **I. Welcome and Introductions**

- C. Lederman welcomed the committee, staff and attendees.
- A quorum was established with six (6) voting members.

### **II. Approval of June 28<sup>th</sup> Minutes**

- J. Colyer moved to approve the June 28, 2011 minutes.
- R. Beasley seconded the motion.
- Motion was unanimously passed.

### **III. CEO Update**

- E. Torres shared the CEO Update.
  - The biggest issue we are dealing with is the school-age children losing care effective September 1<sup>st</sup> that were able to remain in the program through the summer. We are monitoring attrition very closely since the numbers recently have been higher than expected. We are still looking at all of the children that are six years old and above so that we are able to serve children zero to five. We are a long way from reaching the target number of approximately 22,000 children. We are currently at around 26,000 children enrolled in School Readiness.
  - We are also preparing for the next legislative session starting in January. We expect that there will be a number of bills that will impact early learning. We are working on the Early Learning Challenge Fund application, but we are unsure if the Governor is going to want to apply for those federal dollars. Every indication is that he does not object to it at this point, but he has not submitted a letter of intent to the federal government. This does not preclude us from applying for the Early Learning Challenge Fund dollars. We will know in the next few months



whether or not the state of Florida is going to apply. We are trying to put together a coalition from Florida from a number of different organizations that can help us with advocacy efforts at the federal level, very specific to early learning.

#### **IV. Monroe Performance Report**

- M. Williams shared details from the Monroe performance report.
  - E. Torres asked M. Williams to elaborate on the referrals that are made as a result of the health screenings.
  - M. Williams stated that there is an issue in Monroe County with the lack of Medicaid providers. Dental is always the biggest issue in the county, since there is only one pediatric dentist in Monroe who is located in Marathon. There is also currently a problem with more and more pediatricians who are no longer accepting Medicaid patients. There is only one pediatrician in Marathon who is accepting new patients.
  - E. Torres stated that this is a huge issue that needs to be discussed with the mayor.
  - M. Williams added that when the bulk of the patients are Medicaid patients, doctors in the Keys can no longer afford to operate as a sole practitioner.

#### **V. Miami-Dade Performance Report**

- J. Russell gave highlights from the Miami-Dade performance report.

#### **VI. Inclusion Program**

- B. Sands shared an example of the results letter that is sent to parents when their child receives an Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ.) Every child receives a letter whether there is a concern or not. The results of children displaying concerns are sent directly to Citrus Health Network from FIU. They then begin the follow-up process with the family. We then proceed with strategies in the classroom, but if the case is very serious we try very diligently to have the family come in for a meeting to discuss the concerns and subsequent strategies.
- J. Colyer asked for a description of the ASQ and what the indicators of a concern are.
- B. Sands explained that an ASQ is comprised of 5 sections: Fine Motor, Gross Motor, Personal/Social, Problem-solving and Communication. The ASQ for children under 36 months is conducted every 2-3 months. Older children receive an ASQ every 6 months. When a child scores lower than the national cutoff score, this results in a concern.
- J. Colyer asked what happens to children that end up bouncing from school to school as a result of a behavior issue and if this would be caught by the ASQ.
- B. Sands responded that there is now a Social/Emotional element of the ASQ (ASQ-SE) that would look at these types of concerns. There has not been training for the ASQ—SE as of yet, however providers are receiving their ASQ-SE kits. The mandate right now is to do only the developmental piece of the ASQ. However, the state has provided the ASQ-SE for each center.
- C. Lederman stated that families will have a hard time understanding these results.
- B. Sands responded that eventually it will be available in a simpler form. Currently, there is a narrative, a chart and a table offering three ways to interpret the results. Providers are encouraged to sit down with the families to discuss these concerns so that they are clearer on what the results mean. When we first



started conducting screenings prior to the ASQ, a representative from Miami-Dade County would go to the center and conduct the screenings on each child. But since we started using the ASQ we have done several trainings so that providers can conduct the screenings themselves and they have become significantly more educated and are much more likely to better deal with children with concerns.

#### **VII. Parent Fees**

- E. Humes-Newbold stated that effective August 1<sup>st</sup> there will be new fees for parents participating in School Readiness. Parents have received their notices explaining the change. Providers and parents are accustomed to a parent fee and to increases in said fees. The difference is that fees are being changed all at the same time. The fee increases range from \$0.20 to \$10.00 per week.

#### **VIII. Prerequisites to SR Funding**

- J. Russell stated that currently providers are required, as of July 1<sup>st</sup> to have a license with Department of Children and Families (DCF) and are also required to have their license in good standing with no multiple instances of violations occurring. These are currently the only two prerequisites that exist. The other prerequisite that is being considered is the issue of requiring providers to be accredited with an approved accrediting body in order to receive School Readiness (SR) funding. Currently we have approximately 400 providers who are accredited in Miami-Dade County which is roughly 25% of the provider population. One of the issues with this is that we would not have enough providers to serve the SR population so we would have to look at some sort of initiative to ramp up accreditation and to assist providers in becoming accredited. We would need to do a feasibility study to look at the several different variables involved; one of which would be the issue of funding. We currently pay Gold Seal providers 20% more than other providers and this would be a huge funding increase and as a result would impact the number of children we would be able to serve.
- C. Lederman asked if any other coalitions have other prerequisites for participation in SR.
- E. Torres responded that one particular coalition uses the Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) and requires the provider to have a score of 3 as a minimum.
- C. Lederman asked the committee if they were on board with having this feasibility study done to which the committee replied that they were in agreement.
- M. Abety added that there are a few areas of concern here. Not all accrediting agencies are created equal. M. Abety stated that he is not sure what we gain by forcing accreditation on providers.

#### **IX. Change of Ownership**

- J. Russell shared a policy implemented in Hillsborough County that states that a provider who has been suspended from the SR program for licensing violations cannot transfer ownership to a family member or other relative in order to continue to operate and bypass the suspension. The recent tragedy that occurred took place in a center who had previously operated in one location and basically changed the names of the owners and moved to a new location in order to bypass the suspension.
- E. Torres suggested that the committee members look at the policy and discuss it at the next meeting for consideration of adopting this policy.



- J. Colyer moved to adopt the Change of Ownership policy.
  - D. Williams seconded the motion
  - Motion was unanimously passed.

#### **X. Disenrollment Policy**

- J. Russell shared the current Disenrollment Policy. This policy went into effect in 2006 and would need to be cleaned up for consideration by the full board. Most of the changes are cosmetic but there were some issues with the priority classes and the ages of the children that we give priority to. The first priority for childcare services originally said ages zero to twelve for TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) children but we currently serve those children until age thirteen. The same applies to the at-risk category. We need the committee to approve this edited policy so that we can ask the board to adopt it at the next board meeting.
- J. Colyer moved to approve the policy.
  - D. Williams seconded the motion.
  - Motion was unanimously passed.

#### **XI. Public Comment**

- L. Carmona stated that at the last meeting the possibility of sanctioning providers with pre-filled sign-in/out sheets was discussed and requested more information on the subject.
- J. Russell shared that we are involved with the statewide workgroup that is looking at how to sanction providers as part of a risk management policy across the state. We are waiting to see what results from this workgroup to determine if there will be some sort of uniform sanctions applied across the state.
- C. Lederman asked what the time frame for adopting this policy is.
- E. Torres responded that it may take a few months to adopt. Hillsborough County already has a sanctioning policy in place.
- C. Lederman asked that this item be kept in the old business portion of the agenda until it is resolved.
- L. Carmona asked the committee to consider that providers are paid based on the attendance submitted by them, not the sign in/out sheets. While both documents need to concur and need to be accurate, penalizing the provider for something that the parent might do is not necessarily the right idea.
- L. Carmona stated that while it is fair to expect the teachers and directors to have conversations with the parents regarding the results letters of the ASQ's, we must think about the professional development skills of the people that are being charged with this very sensitive task. L. Carmona asked if there was some additional training and/or development that can be given to teachers and directors to assist them with how to have these conversations with parents in an effective and respectful way.
- M. Abety stated that some of the terminology could intimidate parents and we must think about how to better explain these results.
- E. Torres asked B. Sands to arrange a meeting with our partners to gather resources to distribute to parents who need assistance with understanding the results of an ASQ.
- C. Lederman asked that this topic be added to the next agenda for further discussion.
- L. Carmona stated that while she understands the need for accountability and quality in centers, when we are discussing accreditation as a standard, we are not at the point where we can request that now. We should be looking at Quality



Counts or ECERS as an indicator of quality, instead of holding it exclusively to accreditation. It will destabilize the industry because a lot of centers will not be able to do it. Financially, it will burden the coalition with not only the 20% premium that it would have to pay, but also the cost involved with assisting providers to meet the criteria. There would be financial ramifications to the centers as well.

## **XII. Adjourn.**

- C. Lederman adjourned the meeting.