



Program Policy & Strategy Committee Meeting
September 27, 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.; Roderick Beasley; Lucy Piñeiro; Ann Karen Weller (via conference call)

Staff Attendees: Evelio Torres (CEO); Jackye Russell; Mary Williams (via conference call); Kristina Alonso; Milton Silvera; Leeana Pena; Blythe Robinson; Bethany Sands; Nicole Bardin

General Attendees: Linda Carmona-Sanchez (AECE); Evelyn Jordan (Miami-Dade County); Ardene Estrada (Miami-Dade County); Chris Duggan; Marie Woodson (Miami-Dade County); Angela Messina (Miami-Dade County); Suzette Frazier (Department of Children and Families)

I. Welcome and Introductions

- D. Williams, Jr. welcomed the committee and attendees.
- A quorum was established with five (5) voting members.

II. Approval of July 25th Minutes

- R. Beasley moved to approve the July 25, 2011 minutes.
- L. Piñeiro seconded the motion.
- Motion was unanimously passed.

III. CEO Update

- E. Torres shared the CEO Update.
 - We are still providing input for the Race to the Top application which is due on the 19th. The state is working in collaboration with a number of state partners in trying to put the application together so that Florida can have the best possible chance of having access to the \$100 million that are available through the federal government. If Florida receives these dollars we would be able to implement programs across the state, including enhancements to the quality rating improvement system. We should be hearing more information by the end of the year.
 - In regards to the number of children we are serving and the budget, we have still not disenrolled the six year olds from School Readiness. We are currently projecting a deficit and are hoping that continued attrition results in a balanced budget. If attrition slows down to a point where there is indeed a deficit, we will need to go back to the board and reconsider whether we maintain the six year olds in the program.

IV. Monroe Performance Report



- M. Williams shared highlights from the Monroe performance report.

V. Miami- Dade Performance Report

- J. Russell gave highlights from the Miami-Dade performance report.
 - D. Williams, Jr. asked why 98 parents would choose to decline services for children who have shown concerns on an ASQ.
 - J. Russell replied that many parents feel like following up with services is labeling their children, even though there is a lot of education given to the parents to help them understand this is an opportunity to identify early developmental delays and put an intervention in place. There were recommendations made to the inclusion team to work with the parents to make sure they understand the purpose of the assessment and follow-up and to work with parents on the cultural issues that might be interfering with the follow-through.
 - L. Piñeiro asked about the severity of the issues discovered with the assessments.
 - E. Jordan explained that this is not a psychological evaluation, but rather a screening process for potential developmental delays.
 - C. Lederman stated that the letter that goes to parents is very complex.
 - E. Jordan replied that the Inclusion and Assessment Task Force met this month to discuss improving the letter.
 - J. Russell stated that there is currently a freeze on the Child Care Executive Partnership (CCEP) Program as it is 63 children over target. We will be going back to the state in January to ask for additional dollars. If additional funding is received, we will open enrollment back up.
- E. Torres added that in regards to VPK, the Board of Education agreed to increase the percentage of children that must pass both the ECHOS and FAIR assessments to 70%. This means that based on this year's performance data, well over 60% of our providers would be considered Low Performing Providers (LPP's) next year. There would need to be a pre and a post test, and funding would need to be requested from the legislature for this. If a child comes into a program already far behind but the provider works with the child who makes a significant improvement, he/she might still be considered behind. If the child is not pre and post tested, there would be no way to determine this gain. We will have higher standards but still with a flawed assessment system.

VI. Feasibility Study

- C. Duggan shared the preliminary results of a feasibility study about setting minimum requirements for child care providers who provide School Readiness (SR) services.
 - Of the 30 coalitions surveyed, 70% had a requirement in the contract that their providers meet a standard level of quality and will conduct assessments to determine that the level of quality is met. Six coalitions have no assessment required. Three coalitions conduct quality assessments using the Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) but it is part of the improvement process and rather, not a requirement of the contract. Palm Beach County is currently in development to identify what the level of quality they will require is.
 - The tool the majority of the coalitions are using to assess quality is the ERS. Those scores range from 1-7. The minimum scores required by the surveyed coalitions range from 3-5. Three coalitions are using a self-developed assessment tool.



- Four coalitions (Duval, Volusia/Flagler, Orange and Big Bend) were selected to discuss how they approach the process. The common theme among them was that the coalitions' Boards had the expectation that if a childcare program was going to serve SR children, the provider must be willing to ensure there is a level of quality in that center that meets or exceeds the level established by the coalition.
- It is absolutely critical to have the support of board members in order for this to be successful.
- It is important to promote the whole quality system as a parent education tool and not only as a provider accountability system.
- The current statewide contract contains elements that give coalitions the authority to implement quality standards.
- E. Torres stated that the reason a recommendation to put together a workgroup was made was based on not only what we heard from other coalitions, but also the work that we did with the provider contract that required a lot of important input from providers.
- C. Lederman moved to put together a workgroup to discuss the implementation and development of quality standards for School Readiness providers.
 - L. Piñeiro seconded the motion
 - Motion was unanimously passed.

VII. School Readiness Provider Suspension Policy

- J. Russell stated that the School Readiness suspension policy passed by the board is an excellent step in the direction of ensuring quality. We had the first test of that policy when the Provider Services Committee meeting took place, with providers who came before the committee grieving the intent to suspend letter that they received. Three of the providers received Class I violations and one of the providers had received three Class II violations. Basically, the committee heard the grievances and the providers had remedied whatever the violations were by the time they came before the committee. So the committee voted not to suspend any of the providers. We need to have some discussion as to what we should do with this policy moving forward, because we will never have a situation where a provider comes before the committee without having remedied the violations.
- L. Piñeiro asked J. Russell what the violations were.
- J. Russell responded that one provider was over capacity by 50%. One provider had an inadequate number of seat belts. The provider with the Class II violations were recordkeeping violations such as background screening information and employment history information missing. Two of the providers received fines.
- E. Torres stated that we should consider whether or not to amend the policy. This has proven to be a very expensive and time consuming process for the coalition, which required the board attorney to spend countless hours working in preparation leading up to the Provider Services Committee meeting.
- E. Torres recommends that instead of sending an intent to suspend letter, that we send a letter asking the provider to appear before the Provider Services Committee to explain the reason they received the violations. This will save a lot of time and expense. E. Torres added that this policy may well serve as a deterrent to providers that have these types of violations who will pay a lot more attention knowing that they may lose their main source of revenue from the SR program.
- L. Piñeiro asked about the severity and the imminent danger that Class I violations pose to a child.



- S. Frazier (DCF) explained that not all Class I violations pose an imminent threat to the child but are more serious in nature than Class II violations.
- L. Piñeiro stated that doing away with the policy is not the answer. There are some violations that are very serious in nature.
- E. Torres agreed that the policy should remain. However, we should consider that if the committee is not going to deem some of the violations to be ongoing issues and are satisfied with the explanations that the providers give, then we should not be putting providers through that sort of experience, if they are not going to be suspended. E. Torres suggests perhaps softening the letter that goes out to providers to invite those providers to come before the Provider Services Committee to explain what occurred. The process as it is, is very expensive and requires preparation as if it were going to trial.
- C. Lederman moved to develop a discretionary prerequisite as an amendment to the Provider Suspension Policy.
 - L. Piñeiro seconded the motion.
 - Motion was unanimously passed.

VIII. Change of Ownership

- J. Russell stated that the Board of Directors sent the Change of Ownership policy back to the Program and Strategy Committee for further discussion.
- E. Torres explained that the issue was when a change of ownership occurs with a center that has been suspended from SR or is in danger of having their license revoked by DCF, they sell their business to a relative or close family member, in order to start fresh and avoid the consequences of suspension or revocation of a license. Hillsborough County has a policy that addresses this particular issue.
- C. Lederman moved to adopt the Change of Ownership policy as is.
 - L. Piñeiro seconded the motion
 - Motion was unanimously passed.

IX. Public Comment

- L. Carmona stated that in regards to the VPK Low Performing Providers (LPP) it is important for the committee to understand that while the state board of education is looking at the possibility of getting funding for a pre and a post test, a lot of flaws that we currently have in the FLKRS assessment will also be applied to the pre and post test. There is no variation for applying the assessment to children that have special needs. There is also no ability to apply the assessment in a language other than English. In our community, that is a serious issue, not only for the children, but for the provider that is administering the assessment. When the state board of education went through this decision making process, they were originally presented with the recommendation of a 60% bar. They chose to go higher because they were dissatisfied to continue to accept mediocrity. However, if you continuously cut the budget for VPK as they have this year, you will get what you pay for.
- L. Carmona asked that of the coalitions in the feasibility study that have established minimum quality standards, how close are they to paying the recommended market rate as a reimbursement. Recently, AWI released the new fair market rates for Miami-Dade County, and in only the 0-12 month category, the recommendation is \$155 per week for the standard rate. In Miami-Dade County we choose to pay our providers \$117 a week. That is a significant difference in pay. How do we demand quality when we cannot pay our staff a living wage? This is a serious question for the Board to consider as it moves forward. This is not to deter the Board from demanding quality or to say that children don't have the right to high quality.



- E. Torres stated that we have been working with a national expert on reimbursement rates and investments in quality and should have a report from her in the next four to six weeks which should answer some of L. Carmona's questions.

X. Adjourn.

- D. Williams adjourned the meeting.