

**WCCA Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council Minutes
November 17, 2021**

❖ Indicates a vote is required

Donecia Santana called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

Present: Sharon Paradis, Donecia Santana, Amanda Van Duyne, Meghan Arnold, Patricia Crain, Bridgett Librado, Claudia Campaña, Linda Carter, Patti Greenstein, Crystal Robles, Rachel Walker, David White, Amy Phillips, Margit Nelson, Amy Smith, Shannon Marlowe, Jessica Ownbey, Diane Nelson, Michelle Stills, Darlene Cabe, Megan Keiser, Dan Edwards, Itzel Palacios, Arrion Sutton, Ibbly Whitten, Jessica McEntyre, Emily Edmunds

Establish a Quorum - Linda Carter determined that there were enough members present to constitute a quorum and Dan Edwards confirmed that.

❖ Review and Approve Minutes from the October 2021 meetings: A motion to approve the minutes was made by Amanda Van Duyne and seconded by Shannon Marlowe, and the motion was approved unanimously.

New Business:

FA 2 Training: Patti Greenstein

Patti Greenstein from the consulting agency Foundations for Families presented an overview of the federal Head Start Program and the Focus Area 1 and Focus Area 2 surveys that the Office of Head Start performs. WCCA's FA 2 survey is scheduled for early 2022 (specific date has not been scheduled yet by the government). Patti presented training that included the FA 2 Monitoring Protocol questions and outlined the role that the Policy Council plays in a successful review, with a focus on program management, quality improvement, and fiscal infrastructure. Closer to the survey date, Patti will provide more training and possibly do a mock survey with staff.

❖ **Nutrition Program Update: Rachel Walker**

Rachel presented an update/clarification to the Nutrition program protocol that outlined the process for a child opting out of the onsite nutrition program and bringing in their own food from home. Amanda Vanduyne motioned to approve the Nutrition Program protocol, Megan Keiser seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

❖ **Safe Sleep Policy Update: Rachel Walker**

Rachel presented an update to the Safe Sleep Policy to align with NC child care laws and state guidance. A summary of the updates/clarifications includes the requirement of a healthcare provider waiver for alternate sleep positions for children under 12 months; only CPSC-approved cribs are to be used; children up to 12 months will sleep in a crib; newly enrolled and 2-4 month old infants will be checked

more often than every 15 minutes while sleeping; and NC Child Care Rules are followed regarding breastfeeding. Jessica Ownbey motioned to approve the Safe Sleep Policy, Amanda Vanduyne seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

❖ **Vote on 2021-2022 PC Officers - Margit Nelson**

Margit asked the members to send nominations for each Policy Council leadership role to Dan Edwards by using the private Chat Box for confidentiality/anonymity or by sending an email to Dan. Margit presented the nominations that were received for the Chair and Vice-Chair roles on the Policy Council. Donecia Santana was nominated for the role of Chairperson with no other nominations. Amanda Van Duyne motioned to approve Donecia's nomination, Patricia Crain seconded the motion, and the motion was unanimously approved for Donecia to hold the role of Chairperson. Jessica Ownbey was nominated for the role of Vice-Chairperson with no other nominations. Amanda Van Duyne motioned to approve Jessica's nomination, Shannon Marlowe seconded the motion, and the motion for Jessica to fill the Vice-Chair role was unanimously approved. Margit called for nominations for the role of Secretary, but no nominations were given. The nomination period will be extended for the next four weeks, nominations may be emailed to Dan Edwards through December 17, 2021. Amanda Van Duyne motioned to approve extending the nomination period for the Secretary role and Megan Keiser seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously. We sincerely appreciate everyone's participation, our parents' and community members' attendance plays a vital role in the success of the Policy Council.

Reports:

Chief Financial Officer's Report - Ibby Whitten

- Financials and Credit Card Expenditure Reports: At the end of the first quarter of the fiscal year all programs are tracking below budget expenditures except for the NC Pre-K program, which is over budget but this should be balanced out by the end of December. COVID expenditures are being covered by the ARRA grant. Henderson County WCCA sites are receiving free meals for children, provided through Henderson County Public Schools. Grant requests have been submitted with the goal of helping to offset costs for the renovation of the new EHS sites in Forest City and Hendersonville (Tebeau); about 75% of fundraising has been completed for start-up costs of the new EHS sites. Employees will receive a year-end appreciation bonus, the amount will be based on the employee's length of service. Credit card spending amounted to \$5835 and the majority of that was for training costs. We will be careful with our spending going forward due to increasing inflation nationwide.

Chief Executive Officer's Report – David White

- Housing Development Proposal: First Victory Construction has proposed building affordable housing on WCCA's Hillview property in Brevard; this proposal is in the research stages and more information will be shared as we know more. The Hillview Children's Center will be replaced in the future.
- COVID and Staffing: The Office of Head Start is requiring that all employees be vaccinated for COVID by January 2022; we have proactively implemented this requirement now for our employees. After conferring with our lawyers, the outcome is that medical exemptions will be accommodated; religious exemptions will be accommodated for employees whose positions allow them to work

remotely or if the accommodation can be made without an undue hardship on WCCA. We realize how severely COVID and its related issues have affected classrooms and families (classroom closures, staffing shortages, etc.), and we are working hard to deal positively with these challenges given the current state of the workforce and the Head Start requirements.

Enrollment/Attendance Report – Meghan Arnold

- Meghan presented a graph that broke down the average absence reasons and trends. Attendance has been under 85% for most sites, with illness, parent choice, and COVID concerns causing the most absences. We hope to look at absence reasons more in-depth and figure out what we can do to decrease absenteeism and also to support parents since so many parents are choosing to keep their children out of school.

Program Director’s Report – Linda Carter

- COVID: Fourteen classrooms had to close during October due to COVID-related and staffing issues. Hiring continues to be a challenge, with 55 open positions currently.
- Facilities: We have received revised bids for the Tebeau site and the next steps are being determined. A contract has been signed for work to begin soon on the renovation of the Forest City Early Head Start center. A contract was signed to finalize the purchase of the Thermal Belt Ministries’ property for the future Columbus Children’s Center site.
- Family Services: There are currently 381 children enrolled. Due to the staff reduction resulting from the implementation of the vaccine mandate, five classrooms had to be closed, but the Children’s Services team was able to quickly and thoughtfully minimize the impact on sites and families. The most eligible children were able to move to other rooms or sites, however, slots for 15 children were unable to be found, but they will get a slot just as soon as one is available. Our Early Head Start/Head Start grant is at 42% enrollment, the CCP grant is at 59% enrollment, and the EHS Expansion grant is at 7% enrollment as we work to open and staff the new EHS sites. Claudia Campaña is our new Family Services Coordinator who oversees the Home-Based Parent Educators and also works with the Family Advocates and Policy Council. The enrollment team has two new employees who are doing a wonderful job, Crystal and Jazmin.
- EHS and CCP: Our Facilities Director Tim Camp completed safety and facility walk-throughs of all center sites to prepare for the FA 2 review. Pearl Saddler will be replacing Kristy Johnson as the new EHS Program Manager starting 11/16. Kathleen McDavid, the CCP Coordinator, has been taking on more CCP responsibilities and will assist Margit as she oversees the CCP sites.
- Creating a Family received a grant from the Dogwood Health Trust for training teachers to recognize and help children who may have been prenatally exposed to substances and will collaborate with WCCA beginning in January 2022. Several staff participated in Halloween outreach events in Henderson and Transylvania Counties. We continue to focus heavily on recruiting both staff and families/children, employing digital and social media strategies including the use of professional and interactive bilingual platforms such as Hola Carolina, as well as continuing to attend various job fairs. Mountain Bizworks will provide business training and assistance to potential partners as we work to initiate and support the establishment of Family Child Care Homes in Polk and Transylvania Counties.

Program Support Services – Amy Phillips

- Both enrollment and staff morale are presently low. We have recently identified two more EHS children in need of IDEA services, and we're doing well serving kids with special needs, but we're not meeting the 10% requirement for funded enrollment due to low overall enrollment numbers and classrooms being closed, so we will submit a waiver to the Office of Head Start. The rates for completion of development/behavior/hearing/vision screenings and first educational home visits are good overall, especially considering the circumstances of staff shortages, closed classrooms and the inability to schedule visits with families. Amy presented the four expectations that WCCA has for teachers to implement curriculum to fidelity. Coaches and behavioral interventionists are working on supporting the children by building the skills of teachers, and class observations have been completed for all classrooms. Teachers are meeting Head Start quality thresholds in emotional and instructional support, but classroom organization needs a bit more improvement. There was a checkpoint at the end of October at which time we assessed if the children are meeting expectations; this data will be analyzed and shared at the next meeting. The number of children who have a primary care physician is high, although the percentage of kids who are up-to-date with physicals and immunizations is lower due to COVID-related challenges. There are several professional development days and teacher workdays scheduled for December and January. Classrooms will be closed December 20 through January 4.

NC Pre-K / Head Start Report – Amy Smith

- We continue to focus on professional development and teaching excellence. There will be a required LETRS® training for 13 NC Pre-K lead teachers and 6 administrators (including coaches) to provide them with skills for mastering the fundamentals of reading instruction, which will take place over a year-long period starting in January. Head Start and Early Head Start teachers will be receiving 15 hours of curriculum training.
- Main Street and Clear Creek recently received excellent ratings on state inspections.
- NC Pre-K monitoring tools have all been received, Amy will compile the information and do verification visits and then submit the information to the state in January.

Next meeting dates: December 15th - Cancelled due to other training and historically low attendance
January 19th
February 16th
March 23rd (week after Spring Break)
April 20th
May 18th
June 15th

Comments and Questions: There were no comments or questions.

❖ **Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn was made by Shannon Marlowe and seconded by Amanda Van Duyne. The meeting was adjourned by Donecia Santana at 10:41 AM.