

Texas Early Learning Council Meeting Minutes

January 21, 2023 from 11:00am – 1:00pm
Teleconference via Zoom

Attendance

- Katherine Abba, Ph.D. (Faculty, Child Development Program for Houston Community College)
- Sarah Abrahams (Deputy Chief Officer of Prevention and Early Intervention for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services)
- Weldon Beard (Director of Head Start and Early Head Start for the Greater East Texas Community Action Program)
- April Crawford, Ph.D. (Co-Director of the Children's Learning Institute, UT Health Science Center at Houston)
- Rachelle Daniel (Director of Daycare Regional Operations for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission)
- Alferma Giles (Director of the Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office at the Children's Learning Institute, UT Health Science Center at Houston)
- Melissa Hoisington (Franchise owner with Primrose Schools and former President of the Texas Licensed Child Care Association)
- Becky Huss-Keeler (Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Houston-Clear Lake)
- Kim Kofron (Director of Early Childhood Education for Children at Risk)
- Jerletha McDonald (Licensed home child care center provider and the owner and director of Kiddie Corner Learning Center)
- Reagan Miller (Director of the Child Care and Early Learning Division at the Texas Workforce Commission)
- Marisela Nava (Director of Texas Southmost College Early Childhood Center)
- Stephanie Rubin (CEO of Texans Care for Children)
- Amber Scanlan (Senior Vice President and Director of Client and Community Relations for PNC)
- June Yeatman (Lead teacher at the Austin Community College Children's Lab School)
- Audrey Young (Maternal and Child Health Unit Director and the Title V Children with Special Health Care Needs Director in the Maternal and Child Unit at the Texas Department of State Health Services)

1. Call to Order

Reagan Miller called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM.

2. New Texas Early Learning Council Members

Reagan Miller announced that two new council members were appointed by the Governor: Tori Lee, Director of Early Childhood Education at the Texas Education Agency and Marisela Nava, Director of Southmost College's Raul J. Guerra Early Childhood Center. Marisela was present and introduced herself.

3. October 2022 Minutes Approval

Jerletha McDonald moved to approve the October 2022 meeting minutes and Kim Kofron seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken, and minutes were approved. A quorum was met during roll call.

4. Public Comment

Kate Hoffman from Early Matters Dallas spoke in support of the Texas Early Learning Council's efforts in exploring an integrated data system and recommended designating a lead individual to move the project forward in an efficient manner. She also recommended prioritization of tasks, such as creating data agreements and identifying legal barriers, while the legislature is in session. She recommended more opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback, particularly with the Data Roadmap work, and more transparency regarding the state's Preschool Development Grant budget and resource allocation.

5. Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five

Catherine Arwood and Megan Schneider provided an update on the federal Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five and planned grant activities.

6. Early Childhood Data Roadmap Work Group

Sarah Abrahams shared an update on the work group's progress. The work group is in the final stages of a draft report after reviewing several states' work in creating early childhood integrated data systems.

7. Federal Stimulus Funding Update

Catherine Arwood provided an update on the Child Care Development Block Grant federal stimulus funds being distributed by Texas Workforce Commission (TWC):

- Child Care Provider Expansion Initiative- 441 applications were awarded with a total of over \$10 million to increase capacity by over 20,000 new slots, including almost 9,000 new infant slots. There are still more applications under review. Data is posted online at www.childcare.texas.gov
- Child Care Relief Fund- Increased some provider awards amounts based on updated Texas Rising Star certification data and updated Child Care Desert data by \$57 million overall.

Reagan Miller clarified that the application window has closed for Child Care Expansion related to child care deserts and related to infant expansion. The application window for employer connected Child Care Expansion remains open until November 30, 2023. She also confirmed that Child Care Relief Funding criteria will not change.

8. Legislative Update

Texas Early Learning Council members provided updates:

- Texans Care for Children is in the process of analyzing proposed state budgets and will release a report on highlights and areas of concern soon. Other mentioned highlights included excitement that the Speaker of the House is supportive of Medicaid coverage for mothers for a full year postpartum, the Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) exceptional item for Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and Texas Education Agency's recently published strategic plan to support bilingual learners.
- Kim Kofron stated that SB 353 is filed. This bill considers reimbursement rates based on quality rating instead of rate charged to families. There are several other bills in process.

9. Updates from TELC Members

Lauren Gomez (Texas Education Agency) shared an update on the new 2022 Prekindergarten Guidelines. <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/texas-prekindergarten-guidelines>

David Feigen (Texans Care for Children) provided an overview of the Texans Care for Children's new School Readiness Dashboard. <http://www.txreadykids.org/>

Reagan Miller (TWC) gave an update on the [HB 619 Strategic Plan](#) which was approved by TWC on January 6. The HB 619 Workgroup's full recommendations are also available online: <https://pn3policy.org/resources/workgroup-recommendations-to-inform-the-2022-texas-child-care-workforce-strategic-plan/>

Meghan Young (HHSC ECI) shared an update about four recently added medical conditions that will automatically qualify a child for Early Childhood Intervention services.

Reagan Miller (TWC) shared information about data found on the agency's [Child Care by the Numbers](#) website, which is updated each quarter. There is a long-term plan to develop more interactive data dashboards, but new data is being added to the Child Care by the Numbers website now. She also shared that the ACF 801 data report and is now posted on the [Texas Open Data Portal](#).

10. Upcoming Early Childhood Events

Kim Kofron (Children at Risk):

- Early Childhood Education Coalition quarterly meeting on January 26, 2023, from 12:30-2:00pm.
- Save the Date: Early Childhood Education Rally Day on March 21, 2023, at 10 am.

11. Adjourn

Reagan Miller adjourned the meeting at 12:53 PM.