

Texas Early Learning Council Meeting Minutes

January 10, 2025 from 11:00am – 1:00pm
Teleconference via Zoom

Attendance

- Shruthi Arismendez (Director of the Maternal and Child Health Unit at the Department of State Health Services)
- Terri Breeden (Section 619 Lead Coordinator for the Texas Education Agency)
- 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 (University of Houston Clear Lake)
- Kim Kofron (Director of Early Childhood Education for Children at Risk)
- Tori Lee (Director of Early Childhood for Texas Education Agency)
- Reagan Miller (Director of the Child Care and Early Learning Division for the Texas Workforce Commission)
- Marisela Nava (Texas Southmost College Child Care Center)
- Stephanie Rubin (CEO of Texans Care for Children)
- Amber Scanlan (Senior Vice President and Director of Client and Community Relations for PNC)
- Kierstan Schwab (Executive Director of the Texas Public Broadcasting Association)
- Jennifer Stockemer (Owner and Director of Ivy Vine Preschool, LLC)
- Meghan Young (Director of Early Childhood Intervention Program for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission)

1. Call to Order

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

2. October 2024 Minutes Approval

Kim Kofron moved to approve the October 2024 meeting minutes and Stephanie Rubin seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken, and the minutes were approved. A quorum was met during roll call.

3. Public Comment

No public comment.

4. Texas Early Learning Strategic Plan

Bridgette Losey, Help Me Grow Coordinator of Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), presented on Action 1.3.2 of Goal 1 of the Texas Early Learning Strategic Plan. The Maternal and Child Health Unit at DSHS supports family-centered, community-based, coordinated systems of care development. DSHS serves as the organizing entity for Help Me Grow (HMG) Texas and supports HMG Texas affiliates in community-based HMG Systems Model implementation to meet the needs of local families. Families and community members can see on the DSHS website what HMG lead affiliate to contact for their area.

Dana Perez, Health and Human Services, reviewed Action Item 1.2.5 relating to the work of Child Care Regulation Navigators. There are eight navigators across the state that partner with applicants to assist them with the child care license application process. Dana presented data showing that applicants that partner with a Navigator have a higher chance of being issued a license.

Brandi Carter, Director of Family Engagement at Texas Education Agency, discussed Action 1.4.1 of Strategy 1.4, which pertains to local education agencies posting their Prekindergarten Family Engagement Plan on their district web page, as required under high-quality prekindergarten guidelines. TEA's Early Childhood Education Family Engagement team provides support to districts, and TEA has created and uses a rubric to evaluate the thoroughness of the plans.

5. Strategic Plan Workgroup Update

The Strategic Plan Workgroup held its first meeting on December 12, 2024. Ten members were in attendance. The agenda included the following:

- Introductions

- Roles and Responsibilities of Membership

- Overview of Other Early Childhood Cross-Sector Workgroups

- Overview of the Texas Early Learning Strategic Plan

A poll was sent to all members of the workgroup to prioritize the workgroup's areas of focus.

The next meeting date is scheduled for January 16, 2025.

6. Updates from TELC Members

Allison Wilson, Director, Program Policy & Quality Improvement, Child Care & Early Learning at Texas Workforce Commission, gave an overview of the planned launch of Texas Child Care Connection (TX3C) on January 13, 2025. Ms. Wilson also gave an update about the status of the centralized assessment entity for centers to become Texas Rising Star certified. The due date for

programs to attain certification was September 2024 and due to the pandemic and large number of programs that needed assessing they have granted extension waivers to programs they were not able to assess. To date they have granted around 2600 extension waivers. To speed up the assessment process, the Commission allowed for desk reviews to take place. For child care providers seeking a two-star rating, assessors are looking only at structural measures for Texas Rising Star and do not have to conduct an in-person observation to make their assessments. To date, there have been 67 assessors hired.

Cathi Arwood, also from TWC, gave an update on Early Educators Credit Pathways Support Funding for public Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to create and define clear credit pathways in the early childhood field.

Sarah Abrahams from Health and Human Services Commission shared current Family Health Services grant opportunities that are open for applicants.

Stephanie Rubin shared links to an op-ed and briefs that her team has posted in recent months.

7. Upcoming Early Childhood Events

Prenatal-to-Three Collaborative Open Meeting on January 16, 2025.

Early Childhood Day at the Capital on March 6, 2025.

Texas Licensed Child Care Association (TLCCA) Conference for leadership teams, owners, and teachers on February 21 and 22, 2025 in Round Rock.

8. Upcoming TELC Meeting Dates:

April 11, 2025

August 8, 2025

October 24, 2025

9. Adjourn

Reagan Miller adjourned the meeting at 12:38 PM.