

Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Meeting

Thursday, August 27, 2015

8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Children's Board of Hillsborough County
1003 East Palm Avenue, Tampa, Florida 33605

Meeting Summary

Note: The following is a summary of the highlights of the proceedings and is not intended to be construed as a transcript. To obtain meeting materials, please visit www.flgov.com/childrens-cabinet.

Attendance Summary

Florida Children and Youth Cabinet members in attendance:

- Chair Wansley Walters
- Secretary Mike Carroll
- Secretary Christina Daly
- Director Rodney MacKinnon
- Surgeon General Dr. John Armstrong
- Secretary Elizabeth Dudek
- Executive Director Alan Abramowitz
- Director Zackary Gibson
- Mr. David Lawrence
- Dr. Judy Schaechter
- Mr. Steven Uhlfelder
- Ms. Ellen Anderson (via phone)
- Judge Sandy Karlan (via phone)
- Senator Eleanor Sobel
- Representative Gayle Harrell
- Justice Barbara Pariente
- Berthy De La Rosa-Aponte
- Victoria Vangalis Zepp
- Director Barbara Palmer (designee) Lisa Robertson
- Commissioner Pam Stewart (designee) Chancellor Hershel Lyons

Staff in attendance: Nicole Stookey, Jennifer Kuhn, MaryBeth Wehnes, Salina Smith

Proceedings

Call to Order and Welcome

Chair Wansley Walters called the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet (Cabinet) meeting to order and welcomed Cabinet members. The roll was called by Ms. Jennifer Kuhn and a quorum was confirmed. Chair Walters recognized the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program in celebration of 35 years of child advocacy and its more than 10,000 current volunteers under the leadership of Guardian ad Litem Executive Director Alan Abramowitz. Executive Director Abramowitz praised the more than 10,000 volunteers and thanked Governor Scott and the Legislature for their support of the program over the past four years. Chair Walters thanked Secretary Mike Carroll for facilitating a remarkable site visit to Mary Lee's House the previous day. Secretary Mike Carroll also praised Mary Lee's House as a collaborative model for the state.

Community Highlights

Quality Afterschool and Child Care, Kelley Parris, Executive Director, Children's Board of Hillsborough County

Secretary Carroll introduced Kelley Parris, Executive Director of the Children's Board of Hillsborough County (CBHC) and thanked her for hosting the Cabinet meeting. Ms. Parris welcomed the Cabinet to the Children's Board facility and recognized CBHC Board members in the audience. Ms. Parris discussed the Children's Board investment in local programs and services to ensure children are raised well, healthy, and in safe and stable families, specifically:

- An annual \$5 million investment in quality early care and education programs and afterschool programs. Funding provides subsidized child care slots to low-income families and aims to build quality in the system by funding only quality slots.
 - The Cabinet was urged to explore a tiered system of reimbursement as a mechanism to drive quality in the early learning system and to support increased funding for early learning programs.
- A public/private partnership campaign to prevent child deaths from unsafe sleep, drowning and abusive head trauma in Hillsborough County
- Mobile developmental screening units across the county to identify early developmental delays as soon as possible
- Mobile swim lessons at community pools and apartment complexes to address a high number of child fatalities due to drowning
- Mobile food markets in food deserts and nutrition education to teach the importance of nutrition for physical health and academic development
- An infant mental health grant to ensure social and emotional growth of children is met
- A legislative summit focused on child safety, which identified priorities such as the stabilization of leadership in the child welfare arena; a database to capture serious injuries of children ages zero to six, modeled after the prescription drug database; and a statewide campaign to prevent child deaths of children ages zero to three.

Members and presenters engaged in additional discussion regarding tiered reimbursement.

Representative Harrell stated the Legislature would be addressing standards in early learning child care settings related to reauthorization of the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant.

Dr. Judy Schaechter expressed that Miami-Dade County would like to partner with Hillsborough County on injury prevention initiatives.

High Quality Early Education for Dependent Youth, Kristen Lang, Attorney Ad Litem, Bay Area Legal Services

Secretary Carroll introduced Kristin Lang, Attorney Ad Litem, Bay Area Legal Services. Ms. Lang gave an overview of the High Quality Early Education for Dependent Youth Collaborative, a local initiative aimed at ensuring dependent children ages zero to five in Hillsborough County receive a high quality early education. Research on the impact of high quality early education for at-risk children shows that high quality early intervention programs

significantly reduce the likelihood of poor academic and life outcomes. Numerous accomplishments aimed at overcoming barriers to providing high quality early education to dependent youth were discussed. A copy of the handout, High Quality Early Education for Dependent Youth, is filed with this meeting summary.

Eckerd Community Alternatives, David Dennis, President and Chief Executive Officer

Secretary Carroll introduced Lorita Shirley, Program Operations Director for Eckerd Community Alternatives on behalf of David Dennis. Ms. Shirley shared about the services and interventions Eckerd provides to children involved in child welfare and juvenile justice systems, including the provision of Early Head Start services for children ages zero to three and targeted interventions in high-risk zip codes. A data sharing partnership with local school districts allows for daily monitoring of the educational progress of children involved in the child welfare system and provide interventions to support a child's educational needs, when necessary.

Ryan Salzer, Eckerd's Project Bridge Program Director, shared about the Project Bridge transition program which works with youth committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice who are returning to their home communities after placement in a residential commitment facility. Specialized services such as job training, education and mentoring build help build successful life skills. A copy of the Project Bridge presentation is filed with this meeting summary.

Announcements

Chair Walters thanked Secretary Carroll for allowing Ms. Nicole Stookey from his staff to serve the Cabinet on part time basis. Chair Walters welcomed Chancellor Herschel Lyons, attending on behalf of Commissioner Pam Stewart, and Lisa Robertson on behalf of Director Barbara Palmer. Chair Walters thanked Representative Dan Raulerson for joining members for dinner and welcomed Matthew Yost in Representative Ross Spano for attending the Cabinet meeting.

Chair Walters invited members to review upcoming conferences and events. A copy of the handout is filed with this meeting summary.

Chair Walters tabled several agenda items to be taken up at the next Cabinet meeting. Deferred agenda items include:

- Youth Commission Update
- Multi-System Collaboration Workgroup Update
- Proposed Framework and Next Steps for Florida Children and Youth Cabinet

Action Item: Add tabled agenda items to next meeting agenda. Next agenda to focus on Cabinet-specific business.

Presentations

Proposed Framework and Next Steps for Florida Children and Youth Cabinet

This item was deferred until the next Cabinet meeting.

The First 1000 Days, Mimi Graham, Ph.D., Director, Florida State University Center for Prevention and Early Intervention Policy

Dr. Mimi Graham, Director of the Florida State University Center for Prevention and Early Intervention Policy gave a presentation on The First 1000 Days Florida Campaign and invited all an October conference kicking off the Campaign. A copy of the presentation is filed with this meeting summary.

Dr. Graham discussed a research-driven, collaborative public awareness and advocacy campaign, The First 1000 Days, to draw attention to the importance of the first 1,000 days in a child's life as the pivotal time in child development. Using research to illustrate opportunities for child development during this critical first timeframe of life, Dr. Graham presented The First 1000 Days Campaign policy recommendations (below) and opportunities to address each.

The First 1000 Days Campaign Policy Recommendations:

- 1) Expand affordable and accessible high quality infant and toddler care
- 2) Expand eligibility and maximize the impact of early intervention during the pivotal time of rapid infant and toddler development
- 3) Ensure families have a medical home and promote utilization of mental health services, especially for infant mental health and depression
- 4) Improve outcomes for infants and toddlers in child welfare through Baby Court and linkages with early childhood systems
- 5) Support economic policies such as job training, education, and tax credits that promote stable, nurturing, and self-sufficient parents

Following the presentation, there was a suggestion that the Cabinet endorse the specific policy proposals of the Campaign. A point of order was made that any recommendations coming before the Cabinet for endorsement be vetted through the Policy Impact Committee and brought back to the Cabinet with recommendations for action. Members discussed setting a priority focus on early childhood while leveraging the committee structure to develop recommended actions on specific policies impacting early childhood ages zero to three. Members suggested the need to speak as unified voice behind early childhood this legislative session. Representative Harrell asked the Policy Committee to look at where each of the agencies has made birth to three a priority in their budget and policy requests.

After much discussion, the Cabinet agreed unanimously that early childhood is an essential priority. The Cabinet passed a two-part motion to send a letter to the Governor, Senate President and Speaker of the House emphasizing the importance of early childhood development for the first 1,000 days in a child's life and to utilize the Policy Impact Committee to develop further recommended actions for full Cabinet consideration. Members volunteered and exited the room to begin drafting the Cabinet support letter.

Action Item: Policy Impact Committee to develop for full Cabinet consideration further recommended actions (on proposed legislation, requested appropriations, agency coordination, etc.) in support of the Cabinet's prioritization of early childhood issues impacting children ages zero to three

Early Childhood Investment, Brittaney Birken, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer, Florida Children’s Council and Rodney MacKinnon, Director, Office of Early Learning

Brittaney Birken, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer of the Florida Children’s Council spoke to Cabinet members about early childhood investments. A copy of the presentation is filed with this meeting summary. Dr. Birken explained that, as part of the entire education continuum, early education is often not given the same level of credence but is critically important to building skills crucial for learning and development.

The presentation offered opportunities to define quality for early learning and provide resources needed for implementation that result in positive child outcomes around three core components:

- **Affordability:** increase School Readiness payment rates tied to performance benchmarks. A tiered payment structure will allow an increase in payments in alignment with quality benchmarks.
- **Accessibility:** no consistent access to quality programs due lack of clear definitions and standards of quality.
- **Quality:**
 - Address structural quality elements of physical environment, health and safety standards and ratio/group size through accreditation
 - Measure quality of adult-child interactions through a research-based instrument.
 - Use curriculum-based assessment to measure developmental milestones.
 - Enhance professional development.

Dr. Birken closed her part of the presentation by stating that the Child Care Development Block Grant reauthorization requirements lends thinking to the science of early development to define early learning standards, define expectations and align payments to providers to increase quality.

Rodney MacKinnon, Director, Florida Office of Early Learning discussed the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 reauthorizing the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). A summary of state-level changes required by the federal reauthorization is filed with this meeting summary.

Director MacKinnon noted that the Department of Children and Families will need statutory authority and the workforce to conduct on-side inspections for compliance with health and safety standards. Additional changes relate to preservice and ongoing training requirements, expanding background checks to encompass child abuse and sexual offender registries and group size limits.

The Office of Early Learning receives \$580 million to administer School Readiness – about 2/3 federal funds. The School Readiness program serves approximately 215,000 children with another 50,000 children on wait list. He cautioned that implementation of the new eligibility changes has doubled wait lists in other states. A significant change will require states to submit market rates for approval. A potential opportunity is tiered reimbursement. A statewide professional development registry will educate and guide parents to higher quality centers.

Following discussion, Representative Harrell and Senator Sobel noted that block grant requirements would be addressed this legislative session. Representative Harrell suggested that

Policy Impact Committee should review the block grant requirements within context of Cabinet's prioritization of early childhood issues with input and recommendations from the Office of Early Learning and Department of Children and Families. Senator Sobel expressed particular interest in the change of the definition of a parent, homeless issues, and quality ratings/report cards.

Action Item: Policy Impact Committee to review block grant requirements within context of Cabinet's prioritization of early childhood issues with input and recommendations from the Office of Early Learning and Department of Children and Families.

With Tropical Storm Erika looming, Surgeon General Armstrong urged the importance of disaster preparedness for all Floridians.

The Penny Project, Penny Jones, Foster and Adoptive Parent; Past Chair, Community Based Care of Central Florida; Executive, Florida Hospital

Secretary Carroll introduced as a transformative change agent Ms. Penny Jones, a foster and adoptive parent advocating for solutions to the tragic lessons of Taraji Gordon's preventable death. A copy of The Penny Project presentation is filed with this meeting summary. Ms. Jones told the story of Taraji's tragically short life and presented the tragic lessons of Taraji's death:

- Florida needs stricter laws and prosecution of co-sleeping deaths that occur while adults are under the influence.
- TPR proceedings need to be expedited. Two and a half years is too long for permanency.
- Related to mental health evaluations and parental self-reporting, the Comprehensive Behavioral Health Assessment should be reviewed before evaluations made.
- Assignment of case management needs to match complexities of case.
- Reunification planning should remain consistent with plans and include foster parents.

Ms. Jones closed by remarking that she will continue to tell Taraji's story to help correct the tragic lessons of her death. Secretary Carroll thanked her for keeping her memory burning bright and for completely changing the trajectory of her sibling's lives.

The presentation led to cross-agency discussion on many issues surrounding dependency proceedings, including appointment of an attorney for the child, certification of Guardian ad Litem volunteers, active litigation of cases, the need for case plans to drive behavior, and clear statutory language related to best interest no matter the status of the case plan. A challenge is consistency across circuits. Members expressed desire to further address these issues at an upcoming Cabinet meeting.

Action Item: Agenda presentation for upcoming Cabinet meeting.

Open Discussion

The next agenda item served to update members on a topic explored during the previous meeting concerning background screening for organizations providing after school care. Chair Walters

applauded developments since May and noted that DCF and after school stakeholders are closely working together to address the new background screening requirements through The Clearinghouse. Chair Walters acknowledged Joe Davis of the Florida Afterschool Network for his leadership and bringing everyone together.

Chair Walters invited DCF's Child Care Program Director Samantha Wass de Czege to speak to developments related to afterschool standards. She explained that the Department has been conducting extensive research and is working with partners toward opening its rule regarding afterschool standards while exploring the possibility of tiered licensure, certification or other monitoring structure. Florida Statutes grant DCF authority to write rules related to afterschool standards. Valuable feedback from afterschool stakeholders will inform the proposed rule changes.

Senator Sobel reiterated support of minimum safety standards and Level 2 background screening requirements for all employees of after school programs. The legislature has pointed to the need for minimum standards for providers caring for school age children. There was general support of the Secretary's goal to build consensus with stakeholders on the afterschool standards, eliminating confusion over licensing requirements and exemptions in statute by addressing the issue under DCF rule authority.

Florida KidCare and Children of Legal Immigrants, Steve Uhlfelder, Founder, Uhlfelder and Associates

Mr. Uhlfelder invited Diana Ragbeer, Director of Public Policy and Communications for The Children's Trust, to speak to an existing proposal to remove the five-year waiting period for children of legal immigrants to enroll in Florida KidCare. Federal legislation enacted the waiting period in 1996; reauthorization of the act in 2009 allowed states to remove the provision. Florida legislation to remove the provision has met support in both chambers in previous legislative sessions but has not passed. Senator Garcia has championed the issue for years. Background information related to this topic has been distributed previously to the Cabinet.

The presentation was cut short due to time limitations; however, Chair Walters committed to address the important issue at the October Cabinet meeting.

Action Item: Policy Impact Committee to review for full Cabinet approval a draft letter in support for the removal of removing the waiting period for lawfully residing immigrant children to enroll in Florida KidCare. Add item to next full Cabinet agenda.

Copies of a draft letter supporting the importance of early childhood were provided to all Cabinet members for consideration. The draft letter was read in full. Cabinet members offered suggested revisions. Chair Walters indicated that further revisions would be incorporated for signature. The Chair and another member suggested every Cabinet member should sign or abstain from signing the letter.

Action Item: Incorporate final revisions to draft letter and send letter to Governor, Senate

President and Speaker of the House per earlier vote.

Public Comment

Chair Walters opened the floor for public comment; however, no members of the public wished to speak.

Adjournment

Cabinet members agreed to hold the next Florida Children and Youth Cabinet meeting beginning at 1p.m., Monday October 5, 2015 in Tallahassee.

Chair Walters adjourned the meeting.

Documents filed with these minutes:

- Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Meeting August 27, 2015 Agenda
- Florida Statute 402.56
- High Quality Early Education for Dependent Youth Handout
- Project Bridge Presentation
- Upcoming Events and Conferences
- The First 1000 Days Campaign Presentation
- Early Childhood Investments Presentation
- Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 Summary of Statutory Changes
- The Penny Project, Inc. – Penny Jones Bio
- The Penny Project Presentation