

## WNCSource Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council Minutes January 19, 2022

❖ Indicates a vote is required

Donecia Santana called the meeting to order at 9:10 AM.

**Present:** Rachel Walker, David White, Amy Phillips, Pearl Saddler, Linda Carter, Claudia Campaña, Darlene Cabe, Kiki Jackson, Amy Smith, Adriana Abee, Bridgett Librado, Megan Keiser, Margit Nelson, Jessica Ownbey, Shannon Marlowe, Dan Edwards, Amy Smith, Ibby Whitten, Jeanette Rodriguez, Donecia Santana, Amanda Vanduyne

**Establish a Quorum** - Linda Carter determined that there were not enough members present to constitute a quorum and Dan Edwards confirmed that. Items needing a quorum will be sent out electronically for a vote.

- ❖ Review and Approve Minutes from the November 2021 meeting: A motion to approve the minutes was made by Shannon Marlowe and seconded by Jessica Ownbey. There were not enough members present for a quorum, so an electronic vote was sent out after the meeting. The following members cast their votes electronically and the November 2021 minutes were approved with a quorum: Loree Kelly and Marisol Licona.

### **New Business:**

#### ❖ **Disabilities Waiver Request - Amy Phillips**

One of our HS requirements is to serve 10% of our funded enrollment as children diagnosed with disabilities per the IDEA. Amy presented a graphic and report detailing the numbers, showing how COVID has tremendously impacted the number of students with disabilities that we are able to serve, and although we are serving many students with disabilities, we have not met the minimum 10% of *funded enrollment numbers*. We work with schools, pediatricians, the CDSA, and other agencies to determine which children may need evaluations. There have been quite a few referrals, and we are currently waiting on 24 evaluations from the local education agencies. The Policy Council needs to approve the information in the report so that we can submit the waiver request. Two members had concerns about the referral and evaluation processes being followed appropriately, and after a discussion among the members, it was decided that the waiver request needs more research and review. Amanda Vanduyne made a motion to table the request until further analysis could be done, Megan Keiser seconded the motion, and the motion to table the disabilities waiver request until a future meeting was approved unanimously. Amy Phillips will work with the local education agencies and state agencies to get clarification on disabilities evaluation processes and timelines.

### **Reports:**

#### **Chief Financial Officer's Report - Ibby Whitten**

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- Financials and Credit Card Expenditure Reports: We are running below budget at this time. The NC Pre-K program is operating at a deficit due to classrooms being closed. The Recovery Act has provided funding for COVID-related expenses, which we are using toward substitute teaching staff, staff wellness, and facilities upgrades, along with COVID PPE and cleaning. Our students continue to receive free lunches in Henderson County through the public schools. CACFP is still running at a slight deficit (CACFP funding pays for snack foods, kitchen supplies). Credit Card expenditure for December was \$4009, which mostly amounted from supplies and training expenses.
- **Financial Training:**  
Ibby presented a slideshow training about how to read and understand the Financials and about how PC members can help contribute to WNCSource's financial success. WNCSource has five basic funding sources: contracts, grants, program fees, fundraising/major donor gifts, and investments. Approximately 25% of revenue comes from non-grant sources. WNCSource ranks in the top 10% of human service nonprofits nationwide. As a nonprofit, any profit funds need to be reinvested in the organization, for example in areas such as outdoor learning environments or other improved services. Our fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30, and financial reporting is done on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis. Accountability comes through dashboard reporting, audits, and federal and state grant reporting. Ibby defined the Policy Council's responsibilities, which include reviewing and participating in budget processes, in part by reviewing the monthly financial reports. Ibby gave an overview of the budget process, outlining month-by-month procedures, costs, and analyses, and she explained how to read the monthly reports that are shared with the PC, for example the credit card expense report gives a good snapshot of how money is spent monthly on program needs. Regular audits reveal the agency's fiscal health and compliance with regulations (a copy of audits are always available to review). Ibby also presented an overview of WNCSource's 2019 5-year strategic plan, highlighting the success the agency has had with establishing additional community partnerships and increasing private fundraising. It was emphasized that PC members have the capacity to help WNCSource meet its financial goals by asking questions, being an ambassador for WNCSource, watching out for grant and partnership opportunities in the community, helping fundraise by attending WNCSource events and activities, and introducing the agency to potential donors.

#### **Chief Executive Officer's Report – David White**

- Recruitment: The agency continues to develop and focus on efforts and ideas to find qualified staff, and a task force has been created for recruitment and retention. We are using social media and many and varied platforms for recruitment, we have streamlined the application process and given bonuses and extra PTO. The labor shortage already existed in the early childhood education field and COVID has compounded it tremendously. Our internship program with Brevard College has been beneficial and we are looking to expand the program to other institutions.
- COVID Updates: The OHS is in the process of updating the HS performance standards making employee vaccination a requirement (including our childcare partnership centers) as well as requiring masks for everyone over two years old in HS centers. Several states are challenging the requirements via the federal legal system, but WNCSource is committed to our employees' and families' safety and will continue to implement the requirements.

#### **Enrollment/Attendance Report – Kasheiva Jackson**

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- Our overall enrollment is at 44%, much of this decreased enrollment is due to classroom closures related to staff shortages. 147 children are on the waitlist, and 26 applications were received in December. December's average attendance for EHS was 49%, while HS was 71%, and NC Pre-K was 85%. Absences were mainly due to illness including COVID and parent decision.

#### **Program Director's Report – Linda Carter**

- COVID: Due to the mask mandate for children, three children dropped out but two others returned. We lost quite a few staff due to the vaccine mandate but we reacted quickly and minimized the number of classrooms that had to close. We have relocated some children in order to consolidate classrooms; we provided educational care packages and ongoing Family Advocate support to children that we were unable to accommodate in a center.
- Facilities: Renovation work is pending contract finalization for the new Tebeau location, and renovations have begun at the Forest City site. Plans for the center in Columbus is still pending word from HS on the 1303 application. A potential future center in Rutherford is still in the discussion phases.
- Family Services: Overall enrollment for the HS/EHS grant is at 50%, while the NC Pre-K program is at 57% enrollment, and our Home Based overall enrollment is 56%. 58 applications were received during November and December and 38 new children were enrolled. Due to COVID and staffing shortages, currently 7 EHS classrooms and 7 HS/NCPK classrooms are closed. The ERSEA team continues to enroll and waitlist students and offer spots as they become available.
- CCP: The vaccine and mask mandates apply to our childcare partnership sites also, and the Love and Learning site decided to leave the partnership rather than comply with the new requirements, and those children were either transferred to a different site or some parents chose to keep their children at Love and Learning.
- Family and Staff Recruitment: A staff recruitment and retention committee has formed. Gina Dowd, our recruitment coordinator, is working hard to find staff, including bilingual staff and, along with Kathleen McDavid, family childcare home candidates. Gina has reached out to 22 colleges in NC that have early childhood education programs to make contact with future ECE graduates. We have also developed a CDA (Child Development Associate certification), that is required by the Office of Head Start, Pathway Program in order to create a pool of qualified candidates who would work for WNCSource.
- Other Highlights: We are partnering with GetSet in Transylvania County in a strategic initiative to examine data to inform outcomes for children and families. We are waiting for our OHS FA2 appointment letter as we continue to prepare and train for this major federal review. Toys for Tots contributed toys to our families for Christmas. Mud Creek Baptist Church donated staff appreciation gifts, St John in the Wilderness Church provided gifts to the Hillandale students, we received children's knitted hats from two different groups, and the Rotary Club donated a large supply of books.

#### **Program Support Services – Amy Phillips**

- Amy introduced the new slide show reporting format that we hope to gradually phase in to consolidate reporting and updates. Items presented included: Recent HS updates with corresponding links, including the notice that the full enrollment initiative has been put on hold due to it not being realistic during COVID. Curriculum implementation: We're using the Coaching to Fidelity tool to see how teachers are using Creative Curriculum; staff turnover

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has impacted fidelity ratings. Amy presented the development, behavior, health status and screening graphs. We have two mental health consultants who along with the Early Intervention team have worked with 60 children and families so far this year. We have partnered with Learning Charms who will provide free occupational therapy screenings and therapy. New and departing staff were announced. Professional Development updates and training overviews were given. During December 140 coaching contacts were made with 30 intensive coaching sessions given. Incidents that required classroom closures were listed.

#### **EHS/CCP Report – Pearl Saddler and Margit Nelson**

- Culture of learning: We have implemented the OHS Five R's program as a tool to support staff, ensure wellness, promote a positive work culture, and to develop learning leaders. The five R's are responsive relationships, reflective dialogues, reason, recognition, and resources.
- Etowah site intern: We will have a student doing an internship at our Etowah site and hope to recruit her to work for us.
- Smart Start in Transylvania County donated a large amount of sensory materials to us.
- The CCP program has been highly impacted by COVID and OHS COVID-related regulations. Our CCP partners are cooperating with all mandates, and Kathleen McDavid, our CCP Coordinator, has been helping with implementation of mandates.

#### **NC Pre-K / Head Start Report – Amy Smith - Presented by Linda Carter**

- NC Pre-K Site Monitoring Tool: Monitoring has been completed along with documentation, and classrooms will be visited for validation with final verified data to be submitted to the state by 1/31.
- LETRS: This is a state-mandated training program for elementary and NC Pre-K staff in Henderson and Transylvania Counties. 13 WNCSource lead teachers plus 5 administrators will be participating in ongoing training throughout 2022.
- Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale Assessment (ECERS): This is conducted by the state every three years. Clear Creek and Main Street were assessed and received high ratings, initiating permanent licensing for these sites.
- Outdoor Learning Environments (OLE): The Main Street center applied for a garden grant and also received a St James Charities grant. Amy Smith presented an OLE training at a National Head Start *Parent and Family Engagement* conference in December which was well-reviewed; several other staff attended training at this conference as well.

**Next meeting dates:** February 16th  
March 23<sup>rd</sup> (week after Spring Break)  
April 20th  
May 18th  
June 15th

**Comments and Questions / Any updates from site representatives:** There were no additional comments, questions or updates.

- ❖ Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made by Amanda Vanduyne and seconded by Megan Keiser. The meeting was adjourned by Donecia Santana at 10:37 AM.

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