

WNCSource Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council Minutes February 16, 2022

❖ Indicates a vote is required

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

Present: Linda Carter, Claudia Campaña, Amy Phillips, Donecia Santana, David White, Shannon Marlowe, Meghan Arnold, Amy Smith, Margit Nelson, Emily Edmunds, Bridgett Librado, Darlene Cabe, Elizabeth Whitten, Diane Nelson, Haley Johnson, Selena Uriostegui, Itzel Palacios, Heidi Jordan, Jessica Ownbey, Amanda Vanduyne, Dan Edwards

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

- ❖ Review and Approve Minutes from the January 2022 meeting: A motion to approve the minutes was made by Shannon Marlowe and seconded by Itzel Palacios. 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 on February 17, 2022, and the January 2022 minutes were approved with a quorum: Sabrina Gilbert, Christina Balducci, Megan Keiser.

Announcement for Parent Representatives- Margit Nelson

Margit announced that any parent representative who attends the Policy Council meeting will receive a \$15 McDonald's gift card, starting with this meeting and for each meeting through the end of the program year. Parents in attendance will provide their address to Dan Edwards who will mail them the gift card.

Reports:

Chief Executive Officer's Report – David White

- COVID: The vaccine mandate, which applies to contractors and CCP sites also, as well as the ongoing presence of the COVID virus continue to impact our ability to provide services. On a national OHS level, we are advocating along with many other Head Start agencies for temporary flexibility with different requirements, including the staff certification requirement since we continue to experience severe staffing shortages. In January alone, we had 30 employees test positive for COVID.
- Recruitment/Retention: Our internal task force continues to brainstorm ideas to recruit and retain staff and implement various strategies, including the initiation of an in-house CDA (the minimum required child care certification) training program. The plan is to hire staff and let them work while earning the certification because new teachers need to work 480 in-classroom hours before they can be certified and counted in ratio. Most employees should be able to complete the program within 3-6 months, with the goal being retaining staff and reopening classrooms. We will use COVID funds for this. The task force is also

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focusing on developing better hiring processes for a quicker turnaround when onboarding staff.

Chief Financial Officer's Report - Ibby Whitten

- Financials and Credit Card Expenditure Reports: Ibby reported on December financials since January has not been closed out yet. The numbers are tracking below budget due to the reduced number of classrooms that are open. The NC Pre-K program is running at a deficit which was partly due to a billing issue that has been corrected. We have spent 24% of the COVID funds allotted to us; some of the funds will go toward improvements/renovations at centers. The CACFP program is still running at a loss, but it's a much smaller deficit due to the free breakfast and lunches being provided by Henderson County Public Schools. Renovation has started at the new Tebeau site, and the Forest City site renovations should be done soon. December's credit card expenses came mainly from program supplies and parent engagement activities.

Enrollment/Attendance Report – Meghan Arnold

- Our ability to enroll new children has been impacted by the staffing shortage and closed classrooms. There are 194 children on the waitlist, and many of them have already applied for next program year as well. 62 new applications were received in January. Attendance has been improving, with the majority of absences being COVID-related or parent choice. The Family Services Policies and Procedures were recently reviewed and fine-tuned by the team.

Program Support Services – Amy Phillips

- Program Structure Updates: Amy presented two OHS performance standard/policy updates, neither of which affect our services currently.
- Education Levels of Teaching Staff: Our EHS and CCP teachers have lower education levels than HS and NC Pre-K teachers due to the CDA being the minimum requirement for those programs. Approximately 25% of current staff are working toward higher education levels.
- Facilities: Our facilities team has worked very hard during the times of inclement weather to ensure that parking lots, sidewalks, and entrances are safe and ice-free. The Rutherfordton Town Council has approved a plan to include an EHS WNCSource children's center in their Gateway Foundation Development.

Old Business:

❖ Disabilities Waiver Request - Amy Phillips

This was initially presented at January's Policy Council meeting but was tabled to provide time for review and clarification. We met with Henderson County Public Schools and determined that there was a difference in the terminology that was causing some challenges and questions. A better process has been put in place for communicating referrals and determining timelines, including the use of a shared Google document that will allow all parties to see real-time information and communicate and document appropriately. The clarification process also resulted in updated numbers on the disabilities enrollment graphic, showing that we are serving children diagnosed with disabilities (per the IDEA) at a rate over 10% of our *actual* enrollment, though we have not met the minimum 10% of *funded* enrollment numbers, thus prompting the need for this waiver request. We

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work with schools, pediatricians, the CDSA, and other agencies to determine which children may need evaluations. A motion to approve the waiver request 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 on February 17, 2022, and the Disabilities Waiver Request was approved with a quorum: Sabrina Gilbert, Christina Balducci, Megan Keiser.

New Business:

Updated Community Assessment - Linda Carter

An in-depth community assessment is completed every five years incorporating surveys and focus groups to gather and assess data, and the present one was done in 2019 by the consulting firm Foundations for Families who also completed the annual data update. The assessment looks at many variables including service area demographics, eligibility and needs of children and pregnant mothers, employment and education status, existing child care providers, etc., then recommendations are made based on the analysis. Linda presented an overview of the assessment and updates, and explained the progress made on the recommendations as well as further action plans in working toward accomplishment of the recommendations. Amy Phillips reviewed the agency's Self-Assessment and explained the progress made toward meeting the assessment objectives.

❖ Program Goals - Amy Phillips

WNCSource develops 5-year goals per grant program. Current goals include School Readiness, Meeting Physical and Mental/Emotional Health Needs, and Family Engagement and Community Partnerships. Amy presented the current progress that has been made toward reaching these goals, as well as outcomes that have been realized and challenges that affect goal attainment. Two program goals have been added to the Expansion grant: hiring qualified staff to provide high-quality services, and building systems and structures to create a culture of wellness for staff and families. Amy shared the objectives within each goal that will contribute to their achievement. Amanda Vanduyne motioned to approve the program goals, and Shannon Marlowe seconded the motion. 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 on February 17, 2022, and the Program Goals were approved with a quorum: Sabrina Gilbert, Christina Balducci, Megan Keiser.

❖ Training/Technical Assistance Plan - Amy Phillips

Amy presented the training plan for the program year 2022-2023 which aligns with our program goals and provides for professional development for all levels of staff, with emphasis on a robust orientation for new employees as well as annual training for existing staff that meets HS, NC Child Care Licensing and internal agency requirements. The plan includes a budget for different types of training (individual, group, local, conferences), certification/tuition fees, and other related costs. Other plan objectives include the development of diversity and wellness teams and establishing a mentoring program to support new teachers. Amanda Vanduyne motioned to approve this plan, and Haley Johnson seconded the motion. 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 on February 17, 2022, and the Training/Technical Assistance Plan was approved with a quorum: Sabrina Gilbert, Christina Balducci, Megan Keiser.

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❖ **EHS/HS Refunding Application due 4/1/2022 - Linda Carter**

WNCSource is preparing to submit a continuation application for the third year of the EHS/HS grant which would provide funding for 409 program slots for the 2022-2023 program year with a funding request of \$5,621,691 in federal base funding and \$1,405,423 for non-federal share. Amanda Vanduyne motioned to approve the refunding application request, and Shannon Marlowe seconded the motion. 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 on February 17, 2022, and the EHS/HS Refunding Application was approved with a quorum: Sabrina Gilbert, Christina Balducci, Megan Keiser.

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 Shannon Marlowe. The meeting was adjourned by Donecia Santana at 10:35 AM.

Next meeting dates: March 23rd (week after Spring Break)
Virtual Meetings April 20th
May 18th
June 15th