

## **WNCSource Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council Minutes May 16, 2024**

\* Indicates a vote is required

Jessica Ownbey called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM.

**In Attendance:** Heather Brewer-Jones, Kasheiva Jackson, Amy Smith, Madeline Ortiz Méndez, Elizabeth Whitten, Allison Clayton, Kathleen McDavid, Mary Hanson, David White, Eric Hoffman, Jissel Zamudio, Linda Carter, Candy Doncevic, Yecenia Sandoval, Margit Nelson, Bridgett Librado, Veronica Unda-Azua, Dan Edwards, Eric Blore (joined at 10 AM) Jessica Ownbey, Angie Davis, Jennie Lee, Yessenia Garcia, Jen Scroggs, Fatima Aleman, Maria Angeles Ramirez, Ailimys Santi (joined at 9:40 AM)

**Establish a Quorum** - It was determined that there were not enough members present to constitute a quorum. Items needing a vote will be sent out electronically to absent members for voting in addition to the attendees who will vote during the meeting.

\* Review and Approve Minutes from the April 18, 2024 meeting: A motion to approve the minutes was made by Angie Davis and seconded by Yessenia Garcia, and approved by all attendees present at the meeting. Additionally, Kristian Toro, Shannon Marlowe, Morgan Carbajal, Lisa Brown, and Laura Durham voted their approval via email after the meeting, thereby reaching a quorum. The April 18, 2024 minutes were unanimously approved.

### **Announcement for Parent Representatives- Margit Nelson**

Margit announced that any parent representative who attends the Policy Council meeting will receive a \$20 McDonald's gift card. Parents in attendance should provide their address in the chat box in order to receive a gift card.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **Finance Overview - Elizabeth Whitten**

- Elizabeth gave a slide presentation to educate the Policy Council about the policies and procedures of WNCSource's Finance Department, including an overview of the financial functions of nonprofits, WNCSource's funding sources, financial reporting, and the role and responsibilities of the Policy Council in budget planning and funding application processes. She reviewed the budget processes, how to read financial reports, the audit procedure, and the strategic plan financial goals as well as data showing that WNCSource has exceeded its 5-year (2019-2023) projected strategic goals.

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### **Community Assessment Update - Eric Hoffman**

- Eric presented slides with detailed community demographic data, noting changes that have occurred since January 2023. Some highlighted data for our service areas includes: The birth rate is increasing as are poverty rates (except in Henderson County), although the number of young children living in poverty is trending down. Positive health outcomes rank fairly high, more adults are covered by Medicaid now, prenatal care rates have gone up, but dental care is still lacking for many children. Food insecurity rates have gone up, while fewer families are receiving WIC and SNAP benefits. The cost of living, including rent, has increased. Unemployment rates mirror the state average of 3.1%. The percentage of homeless children has increased. There are 514 children in foster care. In all four counties, the total number of children aged 0-5 exceeds the capacity of all child care programs.
- WNCSource has developed internal employment/education initiatives, including CDA certification, site supervisor training, and an apprenticeship collaboration with BRCC.
- Ongoing focus areas that will be addressed to support WNCSource's response to community needs include, but are not limited to, internal program design, community partnerships, mental health resources, staff recruitment and retention, reliable transportation, bilingual/cultural alignment, and affordable housing.

### **COLA Application for Grant 04CH011737 - Elizabeth Whitten \***

- WNCSource will submit an application to OHS requesting a 2.35% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), effective 7/1/24, that will apply to the base salary, fringe benefits, and increased insurance costs for all Children's Services staff and supporting departments (IT, Facilities, etc.). Funding amounts of \$62,471 for HS and \$80,811 for EHS programs will be requested, totaling \$143,282. A motion to approve the COLA application for Grant 04CH011737 was made by Yessenia Garcia and seconded by Jennie Lee, and approved by all attendees present at the meeting. Additionally, Kristian Toro, Shannon Marlowe, Morgan Carbajal, Lisa Brown, and Laura Durham voted their approval via email after the meeting, thereby reaching a quorum. The COLA application for Grant 04CH011737 was unanimously approved.

### **COLA Application for Grant 04HP000306 - Elizabeth Whitten \***

- WNCSource will submit an application to OHS requesting a 2.35% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), effective 7/1/24, that will apply to the base salary, fringe benefits, and increased insurance costs for all Children's Services staff and supporting departments (IT, Facilities, etc.). A funding amount of \$98,746 for EHS CCP programs will be requested. A motion to approve the COLA application for Grant 04HP000306 was made by Fatima Aleman and seconded by Ailimys Santi, and approved by all attendees present at the meeting. Additionally, Kristian Toro, Shannon Marlowe, Morgan Carbajal, Lisa Brown, and Laura Durham voted their approval via email after the meeting, thereby reaching a quorum. The COLA application for Grant 04HP000306 was unanimously approved.

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**REPORTS: To see all department reports, please refer to the Operation Report that was emailed**

**Chief Executive Officer's Report - David White**

- Tim Camp has added transportation services to his directorial responsibilities, and WNCSource is seeking an operational assistant for that department. Our new contract with MountainCare Adult Day Care will provide transportation for county residents to their facility, reduce their per-client transport costs, and bring in additional revenue to WNCSource.
- Several volunteers with WNCSource's senior services programs (home delivered meals, Lunch Plus) were recently honored at an awards ceremony in Transylvania County as part of the Governor's Volunteer Service Awards initiative.

**Chief Financial Officer's Report - Elizabeth Whitten**

- The HS/EHS grant is on target at 75% of budgeted expenses through the end of March, while the other grants are below budget due to teaching staff shortages and closed classrooms.
- Credit card expense for March was \$13,609, with the majority of costs stemming from staff professional development (including travel) and program supplies.

**Children's Services Director's Report - Linda Carter**

- Staff participated in various activities of their choice on April 26 to promote wellness.
- Two new Ford Escapes have been added to the Children's Services fleet.
- Blue Ridge Health is now offering to provide dental care for the children who attend our Hillview center, thanks to the persistent advocacy of one of our Health Specialists, Nicole.
- Eleven classrooms experienced closures (over 16 separate days) during April.
- Four employees were hired, and one left employment. 38 staff positions are open.
- Construction of our new child care center in Columbus is expected to finish up by midsummer.
- We are partnering with the NC Clean Classroom program to register all child care sites to help identify and eliminate exposure to building infrastructure hazards, namely lead and asbestos.

**Enrollment and Attendance - Madeline Ortiz Méndez**

- Enrollment: The center-based EHS enrollment rate is 69%, home-based EHS is at 46%, EHS Expansion is at 21%, EHS/CCP is at 96%, HS enrollment is 85%, NC Pre-K is at 74%. 184 children are waitlisted, with most being on the HS program waitlist.
- Attendance: April average daily attendance: The average attendance rate goal is 85%. EHS was at 79%, Expansion at 77%, CCP at 82%, HS at 82%, and NCPK at 82%. During April, most of the 1184 absences were due to families' decisions to keep the child at home.

**Early Intervention (EI) Report - Mary Hanson**

- Development & Behavior Screenings: 158 children have a "referral recommended"

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status, 100 for developmental needs only, 31 for behavioral needs only, and 27 for both needs. 15 children are scheduled to have ASQs completed.

- **Disabilities:** Each grant requires us to serve 10% of our cumulative enrollment with children who qualify for an IEP or IFSP. Currently, 17% of EHS and HS enrollment, 11% of CCP enrollment, and 10% of Expansion enrollment are receiving disabilities services. Disabilities include autism, developmental delay, as well as speech/health/hearing impairments. The team is additionally supporting five children who have an Early Alert.
- **EI Updates:** Intensive support is being provided to a classroom at Etowah which has diverse needs. The EI Team is planning next year's teacher trainings based on current needs. Planning is underway for ASQ screenings for the new program year.

**Comments and Questions / Any updates from parent representatives:**

Ailimys from Sugar Hill expressed appreciation for the program and asked for further explanation of the COLA request, which Linda Carter answered. She also asked how individual child development is monitored, which Mary Hanson addressed, and Mary will reach out separately to Ailimys after the meeting to discuss any specific concerns that Ailimys has in regard to her child at Sugar Hill. There were no further comments or questions.

\* **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 10:34 AM by Linda Carter.

**Next meeting date: Thursday, June 6, 2024 at 9:00 AM - Last meeting of the program year**

**All current Policy Council members are asked to plan to attend the meetings in September and October, at which time new Policy Council officers and members will be nominated and continuing officers and members will be confirmed.**