



COMMISSION ON CHILD CARE

Meeting Summary May 21, 2014

MEMBERS PRESENT: Barbara Andrews, Sandra Cortez, Carl Eggleston, Laurence Fabre-Welmond, Hillary Fitis, Nuri Funes, Michelle Green, Mimi Hassanein, Bernadine Occhiuzzo, Shaun Rose, Monica Sanchez, Claudia Simmons, Tamiaka Thomasson, Felicia Turner

MEMBERS ABSENT: Aurora Sanchez, Carol Walsh

STAFF PRESENT: Mary Gies, Program Manager, Early Childhood Services (ECS), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

GUESTS PRESENT: Eleanor Wallace, Community Use of Public Facilities; Barbara Warman, Family Services, Inc.; Sarah Wilch-Spamer, ECS, HHS

Chair Tamiaka Thomasson called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

ACTION: The full Commission voted to approve the April 30th Commission meeting summary.

ACTION: The full Commission voted to approve the May 7th Committee meeting summaries.

The Commission kicked off its annual retreat with a conversation about last year's recommendations and their effectiveness in improving access to quality, affordable child care in Montgomery County. As a result of this discussion, the Commission agreed to establish an ad hoc Government Relations Committee to help facilitate improved communication with the County Executive and County Council. Tamiaka Thomasson, Nuri Funes and Monica Sanchez volunteered to sit on the committee.

Discussion: Programmatic Issues Committee 2013-2014 Accomplishments

Michelle Green, Committee Chair, updated the Commission on the work of the Programmatic Issues Committee in 2013-2014. The Committee spent the majority of its gathering feedback from center and family child care providers about the implementation of the Maryland EXCELS Quality Rating and Improvement System.

A detailed list of accomplishments to be included in the Commission's annual report was reviewed and revised.

Discussion: Public Policy Committee 2013 – 2014 Accomplishments

Hillary Fitis reported that the Public Policy Committee continues to be concerned about the ability of families with lower incomes to afford quality child care. To that end, a member of the Committee participated on the County Council-established WPA Workgroup and the Committee recommended additional funding be invested in WPA to ensure that families are able to work or attend school and that children can access safe, stable and appropriate child care.

The Public Policy Committee also worked to improve the child care in public space process, specifically, increasing the transparency and alignment of the policies and procedures of the three administering agencies. The Committee thoroughly studied this issue and participated in the Child Care in Public Space Workgroup for the purpose of developing administrative procedures for the Montgomery County Executive Regulation on Before and After School Childcare Programs in Public Schools and aligning the child care in public space system.

A detailed list of accomplishments to be included in the Commission's annual report was reviewed and revised.

Discussion: Recommendations to the County Executive and County Council for the Annual Report

The Commission agreed that its overarching recommendation to the County Executive and County Council is, "Elevate child care and early childhood education to a much higher priority in our County." This will be conveyed in the Letter from the Chair. More specific, detailed recommendations will be included in the body of the report:

1. Put a plan in place to increase available funding, at Montgomery College and the County Resource and Referral Center, to help subsidize professional development for child care workers that will meet State mandated EXCELS requirements. (Michelle Green to draft this recommendation)
2. Make the Working Parents Assistance Program economically viable for families by increasing the amount of subsidy payments and revising the income guidelines to reflect the increased cost of living in Montgomery County. (Shaun Rose will draft this recommendation)
3. Work to better align the standards and processes that govern child care and school-age care in public space to ensure that families receive quality and reliable care. (Carl Eggleston will draft this recommendation).

Discussion: 2014-2015 Priorities

The Commission agreed to focus on the following priorities in 2014-2015:

Support an increased and sustained County investment in the child care and early childhood education.

Programmatic Issues

- Assess the financial impact of EXCELS on child care providers and families and identify resources to support both groups.
- Research the complement of supports in place for infant and early childhood mental health services across the County and identify what professional training and support is needed for providers to successfully provide and maintain inclusive child care programs.

Public Policy

- Explore the impact of the proposed State and County Minimum Wage increases on families and child care providers and their business models.
- Explore the impact of the expansion of universal pre-K and identify resources to support providers and families.

ACTION: The Commission agreed to reschedule its July Committee meeting from July 2nd to July 9th.

Announcements:

Barbara Andrews announced that the grant from the Collaboration Council dedicated to early childhood comprehensive planning has been extended. One project under this grant is an updated demographic report for families with children ages zero to five. The goal is to have the report completed by August 2014.

Carl Eggleston reported that he will soon begin interviewing for the last vacancy in the Region V office of the Office of Child Care.

Felicia Turner informed the Commission that her office is waiting to hear from the Maryland State Department of Education whether or not eligibility for the State Child Care Subsidy Program will be removed from HHS and contracted out. She reported that if the services are contracted out, HHS will provide a liaison to help connect families to WPA.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.