



**Leadership Council on Early Years
Virtual Meeting Minutes**

January 27, 2022

9:00 - 11:00am

YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/2rRVBvoWDAY>

Members Present: First Lady Kathy Evers, Emilie Amundson (DCF), Peter Barca (DOR), Kathy Blumenfeld (DFI), Kevin Carr (DOC), Curtis Cunningham (DHS), Linda Hall (OCMH), Missy Hughes (WEDC), Mary Kolar (DVA), Rebecca Murray (CANPB), Cheryll Olson-Collins (DFI), Amy Pechacek (DWD), Jill Underly (DPI), Bettsy Wood (WEDC)

Others Present: Camille Crary (Governor's Office), Stephanie Weix (Office of First Lady), Erin Arango-Escalante (DCF), Wendy Henderson (DCF), Danielle Williams (DWD), Andrea Cammilleri (DCF), Jane Penner-Hoppe (DCF), Elizabeth Valitchka (DCF), Margaret McMahon (DCF), Tom McCarthy (DPI), Kate Constalie (WEDC), Melissa Roberts (DOC), Pam Porter (DNR), Curtis Lemke (DVA)

9:00 - 9:10am

Welcome, Introductions, and Approval of Meeting Minutes

Emilie Amundson, Secretary, Department of Children and Families

Department of Children and Families (DCF) Secretary offered an introduction:

- Minutes Review and Approval
 - Peter Barca motioned to approve minutes, Kevin Carr second. All in favor, none opposed. Motion to approve minutes carries.
- Secretary Amundson offered recognitions and celebrations of all the achievements that have happened throughout 2021. Want to honor the cross collaboration work between agencies and cabinets to help WI's children and families.
- The secretary reflected on 2021 and how child care has been the focal point of many conversations across Wisconsin as being part of infrastructure and an important part to economic recovery.
- Theme of the day: How can WE stay connected, collaborative, innovative, and equity-focused.

9:10 - 9:40am

Current Landscape of Early Care and Education, Update on Initiatives

Erin Arango-Escalante, Administrator

Division of Early Care and Education, Department of Children and Families

Erin Arango-Escalante provided view of the current landscape and initiatives addressing early care and education:

- Reviewed the pathway DCF has taken to transforming early childhood system: establishing LCEY, developing the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan, and offering community subgrants from Preschool Development Grant funds.
- Overview of the collaborative and innovative systems approach DCF has taken in addressing the Strategic Plan's goals – 3-tiered systems approach focused on Family, ECE Providers, and the Community.

- To support Families, WI Shares child care subsidy has increased to the 80th percentile to reflect a truer cost of care. Supporting affordability for families.
- To support ECE Providers, provided multiple types of funding opportunities directly for the programs, notably [Child Care Counts](#).
- To support the Community, develop and launching [Project Growth](#) to connect the stability issues in child care and the workforce.
- DCF is in the process of establishing a Parent/Caregiver Equity Advisory Cabinet (PCEAC) to provide a Beneficiary Voice and feedback loops early on when we are developing policies and programs.
 - Using an equity-focused and evidence-based approach, DCF identified three communities to focus their work on: Beloit, Adams County, and Lac Courte Oreilles tribe.
 - Question: Can individuals from outside of the three focus communities apply? Yes, we encourage all Parents and Caregivers to apply but the work, data, and focus will be in the three communities.
- WI Federal ECE COVID Relief funding: CARES Act, CRRSA, and ARPA have funded many programs such as: Child Care Counts COVID-19 Emergency Payment Program, Workforce Retention and Recognition Program, Technology Access Program, Shared Services Networks, Provider Training, Business-Supported Child Care, Child Care Stabilization Grants, Mandatory and Matching CCDBD, and Supplementally Discretionary CCDBG.
- Review Project Growth–Community Approach to intentionally connect the dots for businesses/employers, for families, for the workforce, and for child care.
 - Two grants: Dream Up! Grants and Partner Up! using two different funds.
 - Dream Up! grants are focused on Innovation and Growth: community strategic planning to increase supply building and collaboration. Funded through PDG.
 - Partner Up! grants are focused on existing child care providers: businesses and employers to purchase child care slots for employees. Will diversify the income that goes to the child care providers to help sustain them in the long run. Funded through CRRSA.

Questions/Comments:

- Where are we on child care workers and wages? Have we been able to move the needle? Is there data on that? We are in the early stage of implementing the monthly Child Care Counts payments for the next 18 months. In small pockets of communities there has been an increase in wages of around \$3/hour. We are also seeing reluctance in implementing higher wages because of a fear around sustainability. DCF is working with child care providers on strategies of how to diversify revenue and funding coming in so that it builds confidence in implementing the structure for higher wages.

9:40 - 9:50am

Child Care Funding Awarded Through Workforce Innovation Grants

*Danielle Williams, Assistant Deputy Secretary
Department of Workforce Development*

Danielle Williams discussed Workforce Innovation Grants:

- DWD, WEDC, and DOA rolling out \$100 million in grant funding to regional collaborations to develop workforce solutions through innovative thinking, data driven planning, and leveraging existing infrastructure.
- Approximately \$60 million in grants funds (12 projects) were awarded in the first round.
- Among the 12 projects there are three projects that focus on expanding affordable high-quality child care in their regions.
 - Green County Family YMCA addition for child care and preschool + Youth Development Wing
 - United Way of Door County updating existing child care facilities and constructing new, expanding affordable housing
 - Madison Area Technical College (MATC) serving 12 south-central counties to bolster the pipeline of child care professionals, support facilities to improve quality, access financial resources, and work with families.
- Program will be open for a second round in Spring 2022 and offer up to \$10M per award.

Questions/Comments:

- What was the total application pool? – In the first round, there were around 120 applicants. There is around \$40M left for the second round and we encourage applicants who were not funded last time to resubmit.

10:00-10:05am Break

10:05-10:30am Child Welfare Transformation Overview
Wendy Henderson, Administrator
Division of Safety and Permanence, Department of Children and Families

Wendy Henderson discussed:

- Overview of the Child Welfare System and strategies on transforming it.
 - There are three identified levels of prevention – Primary Prevention, Secondary Prevention, and Tertiary Prevention. The Child Welfare System falls in within the tertiary prevention level.
 - Child care is seen as a critical wraparound service for the child and family.
- Vision: All WI children and youth are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities.
- Transforming the child welfare system is rooted in trying to keep families together.
- Family First Prevention Services Act (2018) – Key Priorities: federal recognition that kids should be served in their home first. This change allows for funding to support services so that more kids can be served in their home without a child welfare removal.
- Looking at the data: in 2017 there were approximately 15.4 children removed per day; in 2020 the number was 11.8 and in 2021 it is projected to be down to 10. Over the last 5 years, removals following a CPS report has been cut by nearly half.
- Highlighted transformation strategies:
 - Targeted Safety Supports Fund – funds that can be used at a local level such as: intensive case management, housing intervention, paying for a safe adult to be at the home, etc. Over the last 5 years the funds gradually increased (from \$1 million to \$5

- million) and number of families that have directly benefited from these also increased from 100 to 1,200 families. This funding is currently available to counties and tribes.
- Family Foundations Home Visiting Program – Leveraging the infrastructure of the existing program to understand where there may be overlaps between services home visiting provides and the needs of Child Welfare families.
 - Child care pilots supporting vulnerable populations
 - Reducing housing instability

10:30-10:55am **Discussion: LCEY Engagement in Implementing Early Childhood Initiatives**
Emilie Amundson, Secretary, Department of Children and Families

Emilie Amundson – What topics hasn't LCEY touched on that other agencies are interested in? Who/what do we want to see or talk to? What impact does LCEY want to have in 2022 around children and families?

- (Kathy Blumenfeld) Looking for a follow-up and/or showcase study from the WI Innovation Grant projects. Want to see their metrics and whether it would be replicable in other communities.
- (Jill Underly) How can we better message the idea that that investing in child care is imperative to women and women's health?
- (Linda Hall) What are effective ways to keep the conversation and engagement going about investing in child care to get ongoing support for families?
- (Emilie Amundson) Interested in data surrounding child tax credits and its affects with children and families. Has any agency such as DOR seen anything or know a little more about these impacts?
- (Missy Hughes) An important topic is getting businesses to the table and understanding the child care business model. It would be great to think about how to strengthen the message and who else can help deliver the message?
- (Emilie Amundson) Capitol Times did a story on the complexity of child care.
- (Peter Barca) It would be helpful for agency comms. directors to discuss about how add to the message/conversation. Where are we at with the special initiative with nonprofits that serve people with disabilities?
- (Emilie Amundson) There are identifiable gaps with connecting families with young children with disabilities to all of programs available across multiple agencies. There is interest and a need to look at what is out there and how to make everything more accessible families needing to access services.

10:55 - 11:00am **Wrap-up and Next Steps**
Emilie Amundson, Secretary, Department of Children and Families

- Tentative Topic for next LCEY meeting – Children's Cabinet
- A survey will be coming out before then
- Next meeting dates: April 28, July 28, Oct. 27

11:00am **Adjourned**