**Leadership Council on Early Years (LCEY)**

**Meeting Minutes**

**DRAFT Pending Approval**

October 27, 2022

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

**YouTube Link for Guest Observers:**  <https://youtu.be/bl_Gp8Arpho>

**Members Present:** First Lady Kathy Evers, Emilie Amundson (Secretary, DCF), Peter Barca (Secretary, DOR), Kevin Carr (Secretary, DOC), Linda Hall (Executive Director, OCMH), Missy Hughes (WEDC), Mary Kolar (Secretary, DVA), Rebecca Murray (Executive Director, CANPB), Amy Pechacek (Secretary, DWD)

**Others Present:** Jackie Anderson (Raising Wisconsin), Becky Glewen (Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation), Olivia Hwang (DOA), Jessica Justman (DPI), Sara Knueve (DPI), Curtis Lemke (DVA), Tracy Luber (WEDC), Tom McCarthy (DPI), Kristie McCoic (Gundersen St. Joseph’s Hospital and Clinics), Melissa Roberts (DOC), Ruth Schmidt (WECA), David Sorenson (DHS), Lance Taylor (Boelter Companies), Tina Tillman (Apple Tree Connections Early Learning Center), Erin Trondson (Madison College), Stephanie Weix (Office of First Lady), Erin Arango-Escalante (DCF), Andrea Cammilleri (DCF), Jane Penner-Hoppe (DCF), Elizabeth Valitchka (DCF)

**Welcome, Introductions, and Approval of Meeting Minutes**

* The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m. Department of Children and Families (DCF) Secretary Emilie Amundson indicated that the meeting would be facilitated by Erin Arango-Escalante. Attendance was taken. Erin asked for approval of the

August 4, 2022, LCEY meeting minutes. Peter Barca motioned to approve the minutes. Rebecca Murray seconded. The motion to approve the August 4, 2022, minutes was carried.

* Erin acknowledged the recent press release announcing the Department of Workforce Development’s (DWD) $15 million grant award from the U.S. Department of Labor. The grant, known as the QUEST grant (Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy, Training Disaster Recovery Grant), is expected to, in part, continue the work of DCF’s Partner Up! grant and focus on connecting the workforce with child care through community-based solutions and business investments.

**Updates on Birth-to-Five Strategic Plan and Project Growth**

Birth-to-Five Strategic Plan—

* Erin reviewed DCF’s Birth-to-Five Strategic Plan. She spoke of its overarching goal of connecting, aligning, and strengthening the multitude of Wisconsin programs and services that support early care and education and developing one larger, comprehensive system that promotes high quality, accessible, and equitable services. Phase I of the strategic plan involves the alignment of DCF-specific programs and is scheduled for completion by the year’s end. Phase II incorporates Department of Health Services (DHS) and Department of Public Instruction (DPI) programs. Phase III will integrate the programs of all parties represented on the LCEY council and is expected to end on December 31, 2023. A framework for the strategic plan will also be developed in Phase I, for use through the entire strategic planning process.
* DCF has met with DPI and DHS to establish a “North Star”--healthy kids, strong families, bright futures, and thriving communities. They have identified core values to help lead them to this end and will utilize population results to create strategies to guide their work.

Project Growth—

* Erin discussed the problem, seen throughout the state, of families in need of child care not being able to afford care or not being able to access care in their communities. As a result, communities cannot maintain workers or attract new businesses.
* Project Growth promotes a community approach to affordable child care. It consists of four components—
  + **Business-Child Care Partnership Toolkit.** The toolkit was developed in collaboration with Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) and Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) and focuses on relationship-building at the community level. The toolkit consists of six modules and can be found online at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/communities/tool-kit>.
  + **Business Child Care Advocates (BCCAs).** BCCAs are funded by the Preschool Development Grant and are housed in the Child Care Resource and Referral agencies. BCCAs serve as liaisons by helping businesses find child care to partner with, providing outreach and valuable resources, and recommending other program opportunities.
  + **Partner Up! Grants.** Contracts are created between businesses and locally regulated child care providers for employee child care needs. Employers pay a percentage of the child care tuition for their employees for the duration of the contract, and the remaining tuition is paid for with Partner Up! funds. Contracts are for the “true cost of care,” which is typically higher than a provider is otherwise able to charge a family. Providers receive a higher wage for their services, and families receive free child care. Two cohorts of Partner Up! grants have been awarded, for over 900 child care slots. Initial data regarding the grant was shared.
  + **Dream Up! Grant.** Dream Up! is a child care supply-building and sustainability effort, awarding community teams dollars for education and strategic planning. Twelve communities received Dream Up! awards. A second cohort of 17 communities just began, and another cohort is expected in 2023.

**Panel Discussion of Partner Up! Participants**

Erin Arango-Escalante introduced the Partner Up! panel participants. Each participant represented a different stakeholder group in the Partner Up! grant. Andrea Cammilleri moderated the panel discussion. The panel participants, led through guided questions, shared their experiences upon receiving the Partner Up! grant and shared the real, positive impacts of this program. It was said to be “amazing” and “life changing.”

The council learned of the struggles in trying to retain and recruit staff in an area without available child care. They learned about the economic stability and well-being Partner Up! dollars can offer a community--the sustainability provided to currently regulated facilities, the opportunity for child care centers to make needed changes and updates, and the ability to recruit and retain both child care staff and other industry employees.

Panelists also mentioned the opportunities afforded to employee recipients after being relieved of the high cost of child care for the year. They spoke of home buying, first-time vacations, continuing education, and rejoining the workforce. They discussed a shift in morale, a positive attitude, and job satisfaction after having an employer make investments on their behalf.

Council member Linda Hall indicated that she was inspired by the stories and believed that more needed to be done to highlight and continue to grow this work. Andrea reminded the audience that Partner Up! had just begun in the spring of 2022, and this was DCF’s preliminary data. Attendees were encouraged to keep telling the stories.

**Building a Community Coalition to Address Child Care Challenges**

Becky Glewen, Mayor of Beaver Dam and representative of the Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation, presented on the community work being done to address the child care issues in the greater Watertown area in Dodge and Jefferson counties. Priority is being given to increasing early childhood education teachers and in partnering with area businesses to help support the cost of child care. Becky discussed how the Dream Up! grant is being utilized to move their efforts forward. Their team has also partnered with Raising Wisconsin for advocacy and lobbying initiatives.

Becky was joined by Erin Trondson, Early Childhood Project Manager at Madison College and one of the core team participants for this Dream Up! grant award. Erin compared the new model for healthy, sustainable child care to a layered cake, consisting of family, employer, and government child care tuition contributions. Although models may look different in each scenario, Erin indicated that the budget must be comprised of/supported by multiple entities to take the financial burden off any one party. Each “cake” would contain sustainable wages for providers, high quality early childhood education, and affordable tuition for families. Both speakers stressed the need for the continuation of Child Care Counts funding.

**Community and Business Investments in Early Childhood Across Wisconsin**

Ruth Schmidt, WECA Executive Director, and Jackie Anderson, Raising Wisconsin Director, shared information about WECA’s Raising Wisconsin initiative and the efforts being made to increase business and government investment in early care and education. Raising Wisconsin is the advocacy branch of the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association. WECA provides significant services to people who work in the field of early care and education. The Raising Wisconsin initiative, launched in April 2022, focuses on the fact that without a strong infrastructure of early care and education, the State cannot flourish. Jackie provided a high-level overview of the program and its development.

Raising Wisconsin has established a large number of different partnerships and was created to bring coalitions together and provide a collective unified voice in which to promote and spark change for the child care industry. Their website, [www.raisingwisconsin.org/advocacy-tools-resources](http://www.raisingwisconsin.org/advocacy-tools-resources)/, offers many tools and resources for use and sharing with other advocates. Raising Wisconsin provides a platform in which to educate and talk with State legislators and business leaders. Employer-legislator forums were held over the last 18 months and informational webinars begin today.

WECA is calling for a broad state investment for early child care. Their state budget requests will include $300 million for the continuation of Child Care Counts funding,

$5 million for children’s mental health, $5 million for the expansion of the Family Foundations Home Visiting program, and an extension of Medicaid postpartum coverage to 12 months.

**Discussion**

* The council discussed the importance of continuing this work and moving it forward. Members were encouraged to share information outwardly and were provided additional websites -- <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/projectgrowth>, <https://madisoncollege.us5.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=10fffa82e4f0692ad703bb39f&id=f0d76f3db1>.
* Amy Pechacek shared her excitement in supporting child care workers and families through DWD’s QUEST grant. She spoke of additional child care slots, especially within child care deserts, assistance with the regulatory process, and educational outreach.

**Wrap-up and Next Steps**

* Council members will be contacted regarding 2023 scheduled meeting dates.
* Peter Barca motioned to adjourn the meeting. Kevin Carr seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 11:01 am.