

Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)
Open Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 13, 2024, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Virtual Zoom Meeting

<https://dcfwi.zoom.us/j/83298452596?pwd=UVJaTmc2VUo2MjNWOXRqQndPdm4wUT09>

Present: Emilie Amundson, Barbara Bales (designee), Priya Bhatia, Jillian Clemens, Andrea Gugel, Peng Her, Bianca Hill, Kia Kjensrud, Angela Krueger, Kelly Matthews, Jennie Mauer, Suzette Mayotte, Charlene Mouille, Kathy Mullally, Rebecca Murray, Lana Nenide, Cailin O'Connor, Stephany Pruitt, Deborah Rathermel, Katie Roberts, Ruth Schmidt, Sarah Valencia, Donna Wong, Dea Wright

Excused: Salvador Carranza, Eric Fulcomer, Jose Martinez (designee), Lupe Martinez

Call to Order and Agenda Review

- The meeting was called to order at 9:01 am by Sara Knueve, Department of Public Instruction. The agenda for the day's meeting was reviewed.
- Sara asked for approval of the December meeting minutes.
- Suzette moved for approval of the minutes, Kathy Mullally seconded the motion. Minutes were approved.

New Member Introductions

- DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson welcomed new members that will help the ECAC further connect the dots especially related to health and well-being as well as the state child welfare system. She noted excitement for welcoming Deputy Assistant Secretary, Sarah Valencia in her leadership capacity at DHS.

Sarah Valencia was introduced as being a native of Wisconsin. Sarah's professional experience includes working in health care administration, social work, non-profits, higher education, and local government. After graduating with her bachelor's degree from Carroll University, she served two years in the United States Peace Corps in Honduras. After returning, she earned her master's degree in social work from University of Wisconsin Madison, where she is currently a Long-Term Lecturer. Sarah worked as Director of Medical and Patient Services at Access Community Health Centers in Madison and most recently was the Director of Population Health and Addiction Services at UnityPoint Health-Meriter and Vice President of the UW Health Accountable Care Organization. She has served on numerous boards.

Sarah talked about her role at DHS and interest in this topic and excitement and experience from across key areas at DHS that we need to have reflected in our early childhood advisory council work.

- Donna Wong, DHS Policy Analyst, will support Assistant Deputy Secretary was also introduced who will support Sarah in her role as a new ECAC member.

- Secretary Amundson introduced Angela Krueger as a Policy Initiative Advisor for the Department of Children and Families' Division of Safety and Permanence bringing the important voice of child welfare to the ECAC table.

She has over a decade of experience working within the Child Welfare System and joined DCF in 2018. Her roles have predominately included working on policy and practice initiatives associated with supporting children and families. As Policy Initiative Advisor, Angela coordinates and supports efforts related to transforming the child welfare system including implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act in Wisconsin as well as, supporting the Department's goal to dramatically reduce the number of children in out-of-home care. Angela shared that she is very excited to be part of this council and believes it is critical that very young children at risk of or involved in the child welfare system as considered as we plan early childhood system development efforts.

- Secretary Amundson also acknowledged a change in status for Katie Roberts who is now the official representative from the Wisconsin Technical College System. She thanked Katie for her many years of partnership on the ECAC.

Superintendent Underly Opening Remarks

- Superintendent Underly provided opening remarks and talked about the importance of libraries for families. She shared information on some of the visits she has been making across the state and learning about how critical early care and education is.
- She also talked about the importance of early literacy, making sure youngest learners are ready to read.
- She also announced a new ECAC member, Andrea Gugel.
 - Andrea Gugel was introduced. She is a policy initiatives advisor in the Division for Learning Support at the Department of Public Instruction, beginning this role in November 2023. Prior to her current role, Andrea previously worked at the Department of Health Services for approximately 8 years, where she most recently served as the Deputy Legislative Director in the Office of the Secretary. With a background in government affairs and advocacy, Andrea previously worked as a Government Affairs Specialist and Lobbyist in the private sector. Andrea introduced herself and shared that she was excited and honored to join the ECAC.

Secretary Amundson Opening Remarks

- She highlighted last month's Leadership Council on Early Years focused on the importance of having access to safe, affordable housing with opportunities for education, recreation in a supportive community and wide-ranging supports needed for housing, including an innovative supportive housing project DHS is leading. She thanked Governor Evers when he signed the Child Care Tax Credit bill that will help put more money into the pockets of hard-working families with young children because families

can now claim up to 100 percent of the federal tax credit for child and dependent care in the 2024 tax year.

- Another legislative win was the “like kin” bill that expands the definition of a relative which was passed by the legislature. It was highlighted as a wonderful example of bipartisan support and advocacy efforts and built on strong support from tribal partners, counties and other organizations focused on helping families.

Joint Remarks – Secretary Amundson and Superintendent Underly 4K Community Approaches Bill (4KCA)

- Dr. Underly and Secretary Amundson jointly addressed legislation introduced late in the session that impacted what’s known as four-year-old kindergarten community approaches, or 4KCA. For Council members who might not be familiar, 4KCA is a mixed delivery model where local school districts contract with community child care providers or local Head Start programs to provide 4K programming.
- The co-chairs discussed the benefits and challenges related to this opportunity and their willingness to work together to find a path forward that makes sense for children and families and the early care and education community.

Introduction of the Parent Caregiver Equity Advisory Cabinet (PCEAC)

- Secretary Amundson introduced the PCEAC and noted that as an agency, DCF is committed to engaging the people we serve as partners in the work we do. One example is our child welfare parent leaders group engaging those who have lived experience in the child welfare system. Another example that has come out of our Preschool Development Grant is the creation of DCF’s Parent and Caregiver Equity Advisory Cabinet.
- The power point shared describes how members were selected, the structure of the PCEAC which was supported by BUILD and the Aspen Institute. It also described the vision and purpose, focus and work of the PCEAC. They are in the process of co-creating goals and activities. Coaching is an important part of this work and was highlighted as a key support for the PCEAC work.
- The PCEAC members meet on a quarterly basis. Starting this year, Cabinet members are co-designing the meeting agendas and starting to facilitate the meetings. Since its inception, there have been some exciting milestones and activities. These include:
 - 100% attendance at every quarterly meeting,
 - Six community conversations,
 - Three parents attending OCMH’s Lived Experience Summit,
 - Multiple surveys for parents (one survey had over 300 responses), and
 - One full-day retreat at Mariposa Early Learning Center to prioritize goals and activities for 2024.

- Emilie noted how excited she was to introduce two cabinet members and noted their role in a panel at Ascending in Wisconsin, excited to hear from our parent leaders at the ECAC.

Panel Member Q and A

Sheila Cruz and Nailah Adama were introduced and Emilie facilitated a question-and-answer session about their interest in the PCEAC, the impact of the PCEAC's work and their community, and hopes for the future.

PCEAC members emphasized:

- The importance of authentic engagement, not just checking a box.
- Leadership opportunities the council has provided for engaging in developing local policies and legislation.
- The importance of collaboration and really listening to all the voices in a community.
- How families need more help understanding and accessing resources.
- That we are all from such different places, urban and rural, we all have the same issues no matter where we are, everyone is struggling to navigate the system.
- How critical it is that parent leaders are heard.
- The importance of asking the right questions and that you are intentional about creating a safe space where its safe to answer the questions.

Emilie thanked Sheila and Nailah for sharing their insights and time talking about their impactful work of the PCEAC. She noted how hard we have tried to make sure we were authentically and intentionally engaging this critical input as peers with the ECAC. She shared how thankful she is for the work the PCEAC is doing, and the time provided today to provide a quick overview of the critically important leadership and work that is underway.

Kick Off Biennial Budget Recommendation Process

Priya Bhatia shared the ECAC process for making recommendations to Governor. Work will begin on our budget recommendations as a full council, want to make sure the broad range of expertise and priorities are included from the full Council.

Subcommittees will be focused on program and policy issues that do not require legislative action. Unlike in previous ECAC cycles, the subcommittees will not be focused on budget recommendations. Will hold time at our meetings in June and September to discuss and solidify recommendations. Final approval of ECAC Report to the Governor will happen at December 2024 meeting.

Priya reviewed prior budget recommendations that were included in the presentation slides. Sara Knueve reminded the ECAC members of the broad early childhood system framework for thinking about what members would like to see in the upcoming budget. Members engaged in brainstorming on what the 25-27 budget might include. Results of the Jamboard session will be shared following the meeting.

Barbara Bales asked about what recommendations were advanced in the past and could be included again so we don't start from scratch. Priya will send out that information and consider that as we organize the Jamboard to highlight this possibility and noted it was important to carry forward those recommendations. Sara noted it was important to remember history and thoughtful prior work as well as consider new ideas. She reminded the council that the Jamboard will remain open for two more weeks and follow up will be shared about what is included there before the June meeting to continue the discussion.

Subcommittees- Process, Structure and Expectations

Sara Knueve provided a short recap of December 2023 meeting and discussion about the subcommittees. She reiterated that the budget recommendations will be considered by the full council. She reminded members that the subcommittees are aligned with the ECAC executive order, based on prior Mentimeter results, the birth to five strategic framework, the BUILD framework and continuing input.

The three subcommittees are Early Learning, Health, Safety and Well-Being, and Workforce. The subcommittees are described in the slide deck and are summarized below.

The structure will include:

- Co-leads, members, and staff support
- Preview the list of members in each subcommittee, based on survey results
- Co-leads will convene Subcommittees and the group will identify a project to take on that addresses policy or programmatic challenges.

Early Learning Subcommittee:

- Co-Leads: Jillian Clemens and Sara Knueve
- Members are listed in the power point.

Health, Safety, and Wellbeing

- Co-Leads: Andrea Gugel & TBD
- Celebrating the addition of DHS and DCF's Division of Safety and Permanence

Workforce:

- Lead: Daria Hall

Priya provided some more specifics about how the committees will work. The specifics of the process are shared in the meeting power point. She noted that expectations of the committees was also included in the survey we advanced. She noted that Subcommittees will meet every 4-6 weeks, 60-90 minute meetings.

Each subcommittee will be working on its own deliverable on independent timelines. There will be a breakout session at the June meeting. Once subcommittees determine a project, we will recruit non-ECAC members with subject matter expertise to participate in the project as well. Focusing on policy changes and program requirements that are within our control or scope. Feedback from last time is that we focus on projects that are aligned with agency leadership and buy-in. The co-leads will put together a list of ideas to focus on. Once projects are selected,

there will be an opportunity to add subcommittee members based on what the focus is. It was noted that staff will be supporting committees.

Members asked about the opportunity for in-person time to discuss recommendations. Many members indicated that they were interested in this option in the chat. Follow up will be provided and we will consider how to do something in person with a virtual option.

Priya reiterated the next steps for the subcommittee.

- Subcommittees will choose a project.
- Members can think about non-ECAC members that would be helpful to add to the project.
- We will send out the power point that has those next steps included. We will make sure the changes noted today are included.

Public Comment

- Rebecca Murray shared information about family strengthening month and the tool kit they have created -
<https://preventionboard.wi.gov/Pages/OurWork/FFFPreventionMonth.aspx> Parenting on the go bags will be handed out during week of the young child – she urged members to take advantage of the resources provided in the tool kit.
https://preventionboard.wi.gov/Documents/10793_PB_PrevMonth_Toolkit_01.pdf
- Katie Roberts talked about a module created to create awareness about children experiencing homelessness. Colleges are using it as part of their pre-service curriculum. It has been shared with the four-year institutions, and also shared at the Head Start conference.

Next Steps and Closing Remarks

Members were thanked for participation. Sara noted that the power point would be shared. Priya shared that DCF is working on the three-year Child Care Development Fund Plan that spells out how DCF complies with federal guidelines and delivers a wide range of services supported by CCDF resources.

ECAC members will have the opportunity to provide comment on April 4, 2024 from 9-10 a.m., a calendar invitation will be sent.

Adjourn

- A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Jennie Mauer; Rebecca Murray seconded the motion. The council voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:40 am.