



## **Meeting Agenda**

Thursday, September 24, 2026

*Immediately following the SC First Steps Board of Trustees Meeting*

Virtual (via Zoom)

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/ZwHwWF9eS-OoPOtj6gHNtw>

### **I. Call to Order and Approve the Agenda**

David Morley, Chair

**Motion:** To adopt the agenda as submitted

### **II. Meeting Minutes**

**Motion:** To adopt ECAC meeting minutes from June 18, 2026

### **III. Early Childhood System Updates**

- SC Department of Social Services
- SC Department of Education
- Children's Trust of SC
- Head Start Collaboration Office
- Department of Public Health
- Other?

### **IV. Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) Update**

Emika Aroh, Ph.D.  
Chief of Strategy

### **V. Adjournment**

Chairman Morley

**Motion:** To adjourn the meeting of the SC Early Childhood Advisory Council

### **Attachments:**

- ECAC Meeting Minutes -June 18, 2026
- Inter-Agency Collaboration Council Meeting Minutes – August 3, 2026



## Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 19, 2026

Virtual (via Zoom)

**Council Members Present:** Representative Terry Alexander, Frances Brown Anderson, Tony Catone, Jacque Curtin, Mary Lynne Diggs, Dr. James Durant, John Hayes, Senator Greg Hembree, Jack McBride, Chairman Dave Morley, Dorothy Priester, Roger Pryor, Dr. Brannon Traxler, Dr. Amy Williams, Sue Williams, Wes Wooten

**Council Members Absent:** Senator Jason Elliott, Representative Shannon Erickson, Constance Holloway, Jesica Mackey, Eunice Medina, Ellen Weaver

**Others Present:** Toni Able, Emika Aroh, Laura Baker, Iris Ballen-Morant, Victoria Barker, Gina Beebe, P. Black, Michele Bowers, Tekethia Burrell, Dr. Crystal Campbell, Kim Chariker, Kerry Cordan, Nora Curiel, Dr. Dawkins, Dwana Doctor, Rudell DuBose, Antionetta Duncan, Elliott Epps, Kathy Fitzgerald, Jessica Fluker, Rosa Fulmore, Quentin Gaddy, Betty Gardiner, Rebecca Goforth, Caroline Goins, Alisha Green, Santasha Highley, Kenna Hoover, Samantha Ingram, Kathy Jenkins, Kristine Jenkins, Lexi Jones, Elizabeth Kabalka, Janice Kilburn, Shaji Kuriakose, JaVonna Lewis, Kristen Martocchio, Morgan Maxwell, Joy Mazur, Tyshica McConner, Darnell Byrd McPherson, David O'Kelly, Karen Oliver, Janet Parenti, Felicia Patrick, LaVonda Paul, Shayla Pettigrew, Alexis D. Pipkins, Duchett Polite, Dorothy Priester, Emily Prillaman, Austin Reed, Cindy Riley, Kate Roach, Delores Rock, LaMyra Sanders, Olivia Sapier, Cheryl Scales, DeAcia Shipman, Sheila Silon, Martha Strickland, Cindy Taubenkimel, Nicole Thomas, Ann Vandervliet, Jo Wallace, Betty Washington, Deloris Washington, Patti Wilkes, Edward Williams, Jade Wright

The meeting was called to order at 3:57 p.m.

Chairman Dave Morley asked for a motion to move agenda items III and IV to the next meeting and adopt the agenda as modified. Dorothy Priester made the motion, Jack McBride seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to approve the March 19, 2026 minutes. Jack McBride made the motion, seconded by Dorothy Priester. The motion was unanimously approved.

Michele Bowers, Department of Social Services Program Manager II, shared that DSS will continue to serve protected families in Strong Start. To prepare for their next state plan, CCDF asks DSS to conduct a market rate survey every three years. The final report from previous years is on the ECAC website. Alisha Green, Director of the Department of Education, shared that they are striving to braid further learning with First Steps through the pilot CLASS observations. Mary Lynne Diggs, Director of Head Start, shared that they will be in Washington D.C. next month and hopefully have a Head Start in all 46 counties. Dr. Traxler, Interim Director of the Department of Public Health, was welcomed to ECAC. She shared that DPH has a new State WIC Director, Jacob Myers.

Wes Wooten asked Michele Bowers if practices will change because of funding changes. She replied that even with allocated funding, things will change without additional funding.

Ann Vandervliet acknowledged Martha Strickland's return to work after bereavement leave and thanked her for her efforts.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to adjourn. Dr. Amy Williams made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Jacque Curtin. The motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 4:13 p.m.



## **Interagency Collaboration Committee (ICC)**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**August 3, 2026, 1:30 PM**

**Present:** ICC Chair, Amber Gillum, Department of Social Services; Michele Bowers, SC Department of Social Services; Elizabeth Biddle, Department of Public Health, Beverly Brockington, Department of Public Health; Susan Callahan, Help Me Grow/ SC Infant Mental Health Association; Sherrie Evans, SC Department of Education; Mary Lynne Diggs, Head Start Collaboration Office; Tammy Graham, SC Department of Education; Molly Huber, SC Children's Trust; Anita Ellison-Porter, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Office of Mental Health; Dorothy Priester, Cherokee County First Steps; Kristen Shealy, Department of Public Health; Breanne Smith, SC State Library; Ann Vandervliet, SC First Steps

**Absent:** Leesa Aiken, SC State Library; Eric Bellamy, Children's Trust; Salandra Bowman, SC ETV; Heather Googe, SC Child Care Inclusion Collaborative; Alisha Green, SC Department of Education, Constance Holloway, Office of Disabilities, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities; Jennifer Jacques, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities; Erin Laughter, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Office of Mental Health; Stephanie McDonald, Department of Health and Human Services, BabyNet Kerrie Schnake, SC Infant Mental Health Association;

**B5 Communications Roundtable:** Communications Chair, Beth Moore, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities; Will Batchelor, Department of Social Services; Brian Day, SC ETV; Tiffiney Paschal, Department of Social Services; Pacifico Perea, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities; Connelly-Anne Ragley, Department of Social Services; Bett Williams, SC Children's Trust;

**Banyan Communications:** Bria Berry, Chloe Cahill, Nora Kuiper

**ECAC Staff:** Emika Aroh, Karen Oliver, Janet Parenti

### **Call to Order**

Amber Gillum, ICC Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM

### **Consumer Research Results**

Nora Kuiper, Banyan Communications, shared an overview of findings from consumer research conducted to learn what parents of young children know about school readiness. Slides outlining research participants and key takeaways are attached.

### **B5 Communications Round Table and Welcome Baby**

Beth Moore, Communications Roundtable Chair, introduced the Welcome Baby project of the roundtable. Welcome Baby is an effort modeled after Ready for Kindergarten. Ready is in its third printing, is distributed through Countdown to Kindergarten teachers and includes tips and activities for parents. Welcome Baby will include tips and activities for parents of newborns and will also include prenatal and postpartum health information. A set of videos, blogs, and other resources may

also be developed to support the Welcome Baby concept. First Five SC will host a landing page. Magazine sections will be vetted and approved by experts in partner agencies. Moore has been working with the SC Hospital Association to develop distribution channels. The cost to produce and distribute the magazine is approximately \$40,000. ECAC partners are invited to support this work. Corporate sponsors would be ideal.

### **Early Care and Education Update**

CERDEP in public schools has eight Early Learning Specialists to support professional development, coaching and related work for 4K in public schools

The pause in DSS scholarships continues. For now, only applications for families in a protected category will be considered for eligibility. FAQs, and other information, including a list of protected scholarship categories, are attached to meeting minutes.

Child care administrators and Head Start directors met in Washington recently.

### **Parenting and Family Support Updates**

Children's Trust MIECH-V match, \$750,000 was included in the state's budget.

Building Hope for Children Conference in Columbia on August 19-20 will provide intentional content for home visitors

### **Food and Nutrition Updates**

WIC is working to fill staff vacancies so appointments can be filled. In June, more than 96,000 were enrolled in WIC. This represents about 56% utilization.

### **Early Transitions Updates**

A transitions workgroup developed materials and resources that help staff and families transition from Part C to Part B. Regional convenings are now scheduled so that professionals from BabyNet can meet, network, and learn protocols of their colleagues in local school districts.

### **Other Partner Updates**

CERDEP 4K may expand to serve families at 300% of poverty, increasing eligible families by 14,000.

Martha Strickland is retiring from First Steps; Molly Tuck will serve as Interim Chief of Early Learning

### **26-27 ICC Meeting Dates**

- Monday, November 2, 2026, 1:30 PM
- Monday, February 1, 2027, 1:30 PM
- Monday, May 3, 2027, 1:30 PM