



**Meeting of the Early Childhood Advisory Council**  
October 19, 2023, immediately following the SC First Steps Board Meeting

**AGENDA**

- I. **Call to Order and Approve Agenda** (David Morley)  
*Motion:* To adopt the agenda as submitted.
  
- II. **Meeting Minutes** (David Morley)  
*Motion:* To approve ECAC Minutes of August 17, 2023  
*Attachment:* August 17, 2023, Minutes
  
- III. **Unified Plan of the Council on Workforce Development** (Charles Appleby)
  
- IV. **Presentations and Updates from ECAC Members**
  
- V. **Information**
  - a. Report from the Interagency Collaboration Committee (Amber Gillum)  
*Attachment:* ICC Meeting Recap
  - b. ECAC Report on Activities (Georgia Mjartan)  
*Attachment:* ECAC Report on Activities
  
- VI. **Adjourn** (David Morley)  
*Motion:* To adjourn the meeting of the Early Childhood Advisory Council



## Early Childhood Advisory Council Meeting

August 17, 2023, immediately following the SCFS Board of Trustees Meeting  
SC First Steps  
Minutes

### **Council Members Present**

**(19):**

Rep. Terry Alexander  
Dr. Robert Bank  
Matthew Ferguson  
John Hayes  
Michael Leach  
David Lisk  
Jessica Mackey  
Jack McBride  
Dave Morley, Chairman

Dave Morley, Chairman  
Janie Neeley  
Dorothy Priester  
Roger Pryor  
Mary Anne Scott  
Dr. Edward Simmer  
Wes Wooten  
Dr. Amy Williams  
Dr. Brenda Williams

Sue Williams

### **Council Members Absent (6)**

Jacque Curtin  
Mary Lynne Diggs  
Rep. Shannon Erickson  
Sen. Greg Hembree  
Constance Holloway  
Robert Kerr

### **Attendees (79)**

Georgia Mjartan  
Avian Jones  
Beth Moore  
Laura Baker  
Amanda Bailey  
Amber Gillum  
Betty Gardiner  
Brenda Cantey  
Buetine Pressley  
Candi Lalonde  
Carletta Isreal  
Caroline Sexton  
Cathy Kovacs  
Chastine Dickey-Jackson  
Chelsea Richard  
Cheri Shapiro  
Cheryl Scales  
Cindy Ellis  
Cindy Galloway  
Cindy Riley  
Clarice Blakenley  
Crystal Hill-Chapman  
Darcy Huffman  
David Lisk  
Debora DePaoli

Derek Cromwell  
Donna Mason  
Dorian Young  
Dorothy Priester  
Dean Bryant  
Dwana Doctor  
Elizabeth Dudek  
Georgia Beckett  
Gina Beebe  
Hannah Espeleta  
Heather Googe  
James Calhoun  
Jane Farnell  
Janice Kilburn  
Javonna Lewis  
Jennifer Williams  
Jon Artz  
Joy Mazur  
Kaitlyn Richards  
Karen Oliver  
Kate Roach  
Kathy Fitzgerald  
Kenna Hoover  
Kenya Johnson  
Kerry Cordan

Kim Trudell  
Kirsten Chapman  
Kristine Jenkins  
LaMyra Dukes  
Leah Crosby  
Lexi Jones  
Mark Barnes  
Martha Strickland  
Michelle Maxberry  
Myrelo King  
Rachal Hatton-Moore  
Rachel Amrhein  
Rebecca Harris  
Renita Barksdale  
Roddrick Dugger  
Rosa Linda Contreras  
Ryan Shinn  
Samantha Ingram  
Shayla Pettigrew  
Sheila Cornwell  
Silvia Landrum  
Spence Scott  
Stacy Greenwalt  
Tekethia Burrell  
Teresa Jenkins

Tiffany Outlaw  
Tricia Gordon  
Tyshica McConner  
Veronica Reynolds  
Meghan Wood



The meeting began at 3:34 p.m.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to adopt the agenda. Ms. Mackey provided the motion. Mr. McBride provided a second and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to approve the June 15, 2023 minutes. Rep. Alexander provided the motion. Mr. McBride provided the second and the motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Mjartan provided an overview of the elements of Act 81 that impact the Early Childhood Advisory Council. She shared that there is updated language within the law that codifies the activities of the council. Act 81 also included the duties regarding the council's work on the Palmetto PreK and First Five SC portals and the South Carolina Birth through Five Strategic Plan. She provided an ECAC budget update. Ms. Hatton shared information on the 2023 Summit on Early Childhood

Mr. Leach provided an update on the growth of child care scholarships where 71,000 children were approved and served through the COVID child care scholarships. \$912 million dollars have been allocated for the scholarships resulting in DSS evaluating the current median income requirements. 1,798 children are currently enrolled in the 4K plus Siblings program. DSS launched new grants for child care providers. In June 2023 they started to implement startup grants for new providers who want to open a licensed child care center or regulated family child care home. On August 7<sup>th</sup> they rolled out Materials, Health, and Safety grants to existing providers. 1,200 providers applied and at this time they have paid out 700 providers. In October they will launch a grant that is designed to increase retention for child care employees. DSS's CCDF 2024 plan submission requires providing updates on the process. Instead of doing a market survey, DSS will complete an alternative methodology process that captures and informs of the setting of childcare reimbursement rates. This involves the understanding of cost of care, market rate approach and what families can afford. DSS engaged national experts that have led the process in a few other states and are actively working in 4 states, including South Carolina. Cross-sector work is being done to support the reduction and elimination of preschool suspension and expulsion. The cross-sector group developed definitions in 2016 as a resource to assist childcare providers with children with challenging behaviors. The workgroup reconvened and the definitions were updated this year and will be included in DSS's 2024 state plan. The benefits of the definitions allow for the collection of valid, reliable data. Having shared definitions can also provide a foundation upon which to inform activities and services. The definitions have been shared with SC Early Learning Roundtable, Advisory Council for Education of Students with Disabilities Preschool Committee, and the SC Build State Team, SC Interagency Coordinating Council. This has resulted in the following action steps: 1. implemented a coordinated communication strategy. 2. pulling resources together to map out and ensure process flow there for the creation of a central point of contact to get resources for childcare providers. 3. building on state professional development teams to promote social and emotional development and to prevent suspension and expulsion.

Ms. Gillum provided an update on the Interagency Collaboration Committee and work around the SC Birth through Five Plan.



Ms. Mjartan shared the SC Birth through Five Plan was one of fifteen documents to win a notable document award from the National Conference of State Legislatures and Legislative Research Librarians Staff Association. From May 1<sup>st</sup> to July 31<sup>st</sup> the First Five SC portal had 851 completed applications.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Wooten provided the motion, seconded by Mr. Pryor, and unanimously approved. The meeting ended at 4:04 pm.



***Interagency Collaboration Committee  
Meeting Recap  
September 12, 2023***

Present: Amber Gillum, Department of Social Services, Leesa Aiken, SC State Library; Eric Bellamy, Children's Trust; Jennifer Buster, Department of Health and Human Services; Mary Lynne Diggs, Head Start Collaboration Office; Jennifer Jaques, Department of Disabilities and Special Needs; Louise Johnson, Department of Mental Health; Georgia Mjartan, SC First Steps/ECAC; Rusty Monhollon, Commission on Higher Education; Bill Simpson, Department of Disabilities and Special Needs

Absent: Solandra Bowman, SC Educational Television; Matthew Ferguson, Department of Education; Brannon Traxler, Department of Health and Environmental Control

ECAC Staff: Laura Baker, Roddrick Dugger, Rachal Hatton-Moore, Myrelo King, Karen Oliver, Kaitlyn Richards

ICC Chair, Amber Gillum, convened the meeting.

Georgia Mjartan provided an update about the August 17 Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) meeting. At the meeting the Department of Mental Health was welcomed (back) to ECAC. She also noted that the 2023-2024 budget included recurring funds for Palmetto Pre K and First Five, and two full-time positions.

ICC members discussed the Birth through Five Plan priorities for 2023. Participants noted:

- Increasing enrollment in preschool programs first requires understanding current participation in programs, so preschool program partners can make data-based decisions about where to build new slots and where to fill existing slots.
- Compared to last year, there has been a net gain of new child care facilities (family and center based care) and the number of new slots.
- Average wage of child care providers is low, so retaining child care workers is challenging.
- Access to affordable child care is a workforce issue. We can't dismantle child care regulations such that health and safety of children are impacted when trying to support the workforce.
- The issue of child care is included in the Coordinating Council on Workforce Development's unified plan.
- First Five SC working to engage new partners with application, including Child Find, Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting, and Head Start programs.
- The SC Early Learning Extension (SC ELE) grant ends February 2024. The Department of Education, the state's grantee, may request a no cost extension.

Next steps regarding the Birth through Five Plan include:

- ECAC staff updating data presented in the plan

- Reporting data related to plan measures
- ICC and workgroups developing reports of achievements and recommending priorities for 2024.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 PM.



## **Report on Early Childhood Advisory Council Activities** **October 17, 2023**

### **ECAC**

First Steps submitted state budget requests for a number of needs for the 2023-24 fiscal year. One request approved by the General Assembly was for \$851,000 in recurring State General Funds to continue development, maintain and promote Palmetto PreK and First Five SC, and to fund two positions supporting the ECAC. This is the most significant appropriation to date by the State to support ECAC.

For FY 2024-2025, \$242,272 is requested to fund two positions and associated operating costs for research, IT, and longitudinal data systems support.

### **SC Early Childhood Integrated Data System**

- Data Governance
  - The Data Governance Charter is being reviewed under the leadership of the Data Governance Coordinator and with input from the Data Governance Work Group.
- Early Learning Extension
  - Student Unique Number System (SUNS) ID training completed by all partners: SC DSS; 22 Head Starts; SCFS
  - Annual report due in December. Partners plan to apply for a no cost extension to continue early learning extension work through February 2025.
- Palmetto Drive to Five
  - Dashboard created. Plans for populating with partners' data are underway.

### **Palmetto Pre-K and First Five SC**

#### **Palmetto Pre-K** (portal address: [www.PalmettoPrek.org](http://www.PalmettoPrek.org))

Website: February 1, 2020 – September 30, 2023

- Unique website visitors: 202,748
- Total leads: 26,695
- Eligible for at least one program: 21,815
- Head Start eligible: 10,948
- Public School eligible: 9,466
- First Steps 4K eligible: 7,048
- SC DSS Child Care Scholarship Program eligible: 3,902

#### **First Five SC** (portal address: [www.First5SC.org](http://www.First5SC.org))

- Training for providers is scheduled for October 30. Trainings are scheduled each month through February of 2024 for a total of 11 planned trainings.
- Six education and outreach activities completed in August and September, reaching approximately 2000 people.

- First Five SC Website: February 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023
  - Unique website visitors: 191,810
  - Total leads: 16,042
- First Five SC Applications: May 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023  
Total Applications Received: 1198  
*By program:*
  - First Steps 4K: 73
  - WIC: 288
  - SC Child Care Scholarships: 492
  - First Steps Local Partnerships: 625

### **Family Voice Council (FVC)**

Currently, 14 parents and caregivers represent the FVC. Six seats remain unfilled, with three candidates currently in the onboarding process. Six potential members are being considered for open seats and seats opening in January 2024.

FVC led content curation for the 2023 SC Summit on Early Childhood. The theme this year is “We are Family.” Summit registration is open.

### **Grants**

- Alliance for Early Success  
Three members of the ECAC team will participate in the Alliance Connect Conference in Charlotte in late October.
- Preschool Development Grant (PDG B5)
  - South Carolina was invited by the PDG TA Center to present in a webinar about coordinated entry on October 3. Rachal Hatton Moore, ECAC Two-gen Coordinator, presented First Five SC. Seventy-five people participated.
  - South Carolina, along with other PDG B5 grantees were awarded supplemental funds to enhance and build on their planning work. No cost extensions may be requested through December 2024. It is expected that South Carolina will request that extension.
  - Grants.gov forecasted that up to 10 PDG B5 renewal grants will be awarded in 2024. South Carolina is eligible to apply.
- Pritzker Children’s Initiative– Support State and Local Leaders to Build Comprehensive Early Childhood System Portals
  - A toolkit to provide support to other states interested in replicating First 5 SC was launched. Representatives from 31 states have reviewed the toolkit as of September 29.
  - For the months of August and September, First Five SC team members have presented at two in-person presentations, two virtual presentations and one podcast.
  - 10 states and San Diego have indicated interest in learning from South Carolina about developing their own platforms and eligibility/application portals.