



Meeting of the Early Childhood Advisory Council

August 17, 2023, immediately following the SC First Steps Board Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83722694987?pwd=dDhVLzIMYkRPMHIPYktkb0NwbFgzUT09>

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 June 15, 2023
Attachment: June 15, 2023, Minutes

- III. **Impact of Act 81 on ECAC (Georgia Mjartan)**

- IV. **2023 SC Summit on Early Childhood (Rachal Hatton-Moore)**

- V. **Presentations and Updates from ECAC Members**

- VI. **Information**
 - a. **Report from the Interagency Collaboration Committee (Amber Gillum)**
 - b. **ECAC Report on Activities (Georgia Mjartan)**
Attachment: ECAC Report on Activities

- VII. **Adjourn (David Morley)**
Motion: To adjourn the meeting of the Early Childhood Advisory Council



Early Childhood Advisory Council Meeting

June 15, 2023, immediately following the SCFS Board of Trustees Meeting
SC First Steps
Minutes

Trustees Present (14):

Rep. Terry Alexander
Dr. Shelley Canright, Vice Chair
Jacque Curtin
Matthew Ferguson
John Hayes
Tim Holt
Dave Morley
Janie Neeley
Roger Pryor

Dr. Edward Simmer
Wes Wooten
Sue Williams
Dr. Amy Williams
Dr. Brenda Williams

Trustees Absent (8)

Mary Lynne Diggs
Rep. Shannon Erickson
Sen. Greg Hembree
Constance Holloway
Robert Kerr
Mike Leach
Jessica Mackey
Sen. Gerald Malloy

Attendees (65)

Georgia Mjartan
Avian Jones
Beth Moore
Laura Baker
Alie Boykin
Amber Gillum
Amy Engle
Andrea Larry
Ashlea Hatcher
Ben Gibson
Berry Kelly
Betty Gardiner
Betty Washington
Brandie Maness
Bruce Taylor
Candi Lalonde
Carletta Isreal
Chastine Dickey-Jackson
Cindy Ellis
Darcy Huffman
Derek Cromwell
Dorian Young
Dwana Doctor
Faith McCaul
Felicia Battle

Gina Beebe
Jennifer Williams
Jenny May
Jon Artz
Joy Mazur
Kaitlyn Richards
Karen Oliver
Kate Roach
Kathy Fitzgerald
Kathy Jenkins
Katie Perkins
Kelly Boniecki
Kenna Hoover
Kerry Cordan
Kim Trudell
Kristen Martocchio
Kristine Jenkins
LaMyra Dukes
Leah Crosby
Lexi Jones
Lis Guimaraes
Mark Barnes
Martha Strickland
Meredith Dickens
Myrelo King
Pauletta Plowden

Rachal Hatton
Riley Dixon
Roddrick Dugger
Ryan Shinn
Sally McClellan
Samantha Ingram
Sarah Eargle
Sarah Holcutt
Stacy Greenwalt
Shayla Pettigrew
Sheila Cornwell
SheKiah Reese
Tamatha Kohler
Tricia Gordon



The meeting began at 3:12 p.m.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to adopt the agenda. Rep. Alexander provided the motion. Mr. Holt provided a second and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to approve the April 20, 2023 minutes. Dr. Canright provided the motion. Dr. Simmer provided the second and the motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Gillum provided an update on DSS's work of expanding transportation availability to families as a result of amended objective 2.4 in the SC Birth through Five Strategic Plan. In efforts to increase childcare infrastructure across the state, DSS is launching the Success Grants Project, which are startup grants for individuals who wish to open a licensed center or license to regulate family child care homes. DSS will launch an additional round of materials grants for existing providers. This will provide funds for a wide range of activities such as classroom materials, outdoor equipment, renovations, and other improvements. Grants will be available to all regulated child care providers as well as license exempt who are enrolled in ABC Quality. Wage supplements for child care providers will go into effect in August. Currently, there are enough stimulus funds to cover one year of supplements. A conversation will take place about how DSS will intend to sustain this effort moving forward, given the fact that the stimulus is running out and the recurring funds are not sufficient to covering the costs. In FY24 DSS will increase the number of child care scholarships awarded to local partnerships from 385 to 579.

Dr. Simmer provided a WIC update. He shared that participation is up by 9,000 from last year. The state breast feeding rate has increased from 20.7 in 2021 to 29.3 as of March 2023. The redemption rates for fresh foods and vegetables through the extra cash value benefit that's now available in the WIC program increased from 61% to 71% over the past year. South Carolina WIC was selected as a subgrantee of the USDA and Tufts University Grant, which is focusing on telehealth intervention strategies to develop online mobile-friendly telehealth technologies. This will provide WIC participants enhanced access to services.

Ms. Gillum reported on the Interagency Collaboration Committee.

Ms. Mjartan presented the South Carolina's Birth through Five Progress Report. She provided an update on First 5 SC analytics.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Simmer provided the motion, seconded by Mr. Wooten, and unanimously approved. The meeting ended at 3:48 p.m.



Report on Early Childhood Advisory Council Activities August 17, 2023

ECAC

First Steps submitted state budget requests for a number of needs for the 2023-24 fiscal year. One request submitted and approved by the General Assembly was for \$851,000 in recurring State General Funds to fund two employees supporting the ECAC, bringing the total to three, along with other needs including marketing and the continued maintenance and development of Palmetto PreK First Five SC. This is the most significant appropriation to date by the State to support these efforts.

South Carolina's Birth Through Five Plan

For our Future: South Carolina's Birth Through Five Plan, has been used as a reference for the Coordinating Council on Workforce Development (CCWD). First Steps/ECAC staff have consulted with the Department of Workforce as this agency undertakes the work of bringing together a range of stakeholders for the purpose of developing and then implementing a unified plan.

As reported previously, *For our Future* was awarded a Notable State Document Award by the State Library in March. The State Library submitted *For Our Future* to Legislative Research Librarians (LRL) Professional Staff Association of the [National Conference of State Legislatures \(NCSL\)](#) which also holds an [annual document awards program](#). *For Our Future* was one of 15 notable document winners.

SC Early Childhood Integrated Data System

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation invited First Steps to apply for and then awarded a two-year Strategic Data Fellowship to support data use for the South Carolina Early Childhood Advisory Council.

ECAC staff presented at the National Center for Education Statistics Conference, "Managing the Data Highway." Staff served on a panel with SC Department of Education, "Integrating Early Childhood Data in South Carolina: A Journey in Data Governance" on August 11.

Palmetto Pre-K and First Five SC

Palmetto Pre-K (portal address: www.PalmettoPrek.org)

Feb. 1, 2020 – Jul. 31, 2023

- Unique website visitors: 193,915
- Total leads: 25,872
- Eligible for at least one program: 21,123
- Head Start eligible: 10,582
- Public School eligible: 9,297
- First Steps 4K eligible: 6,859
- SC DSS Child Care Scholarship Program eligible: 3,750

First Five SC (portal address: www.First5SC.org)

First Five SC launched the common application to the public on May 1, 2023, representing 29 early childhood programs and services across three agencies. The event was held at the SC State Museum, and had notable media attention, including interviews with SC Family Voice Council Member Ashley Berendzen.

- **Website: February 1, 2022 – July 31, 2023**
 - Unique Visitors: 161,715
 - Unique Leads: 15,601
 - Pageviews: 356,582
- **Applications: May 1, 2023 – July 31, 2023**
 - Total Applications Received: 851
 - By program:*
 - First Steps 4K: 40
 - WIC: 154
 - SC Child Care Scholarships: 280
 - First Steps Local Partnerships: 377

Family Voice Council (FVC)

Currently, 14 parents and caregivers represent the FVC. Nine members' terms ended in July. Five new members joined for August 2023-July 2024 terms. Six seats remain open, and several candidates currently are being considered. The open seats should be filled by 10/1/23.

Grants1. Alliance for Early Success

Since its first award, the Alliance's support for South Carolina's work has tripled, from an original \$25,000 grant to its most recent unrestricted award of \$75,000. The Alliance continues to be a source of information about issues at both state and national levels. The Alliance also has been a support in connecting the First Five SC team with other leaders interested in supporting families through efficient and effective technical solutions.

2. Preschool Development Grant (PDG B5)

The PDG B5 grant has provided a great deal of support for the ECAC and First Steps since it was awarded in 2019. In turn, First Steps has been able to offer the full 30% match required to receive this grant. Since 2019 SC DSS as the lead applicant and First Steps as the match partner have brought 40.6 million dollars to build and improve the early childhood system in the state.

The PDG B5 team submitted a Workforce Implementation Plan, to its grant program officer at the Administration for Children and Families in July. This plan outlines how partners, led by child care staff from SC DSS, will recruit and retain early education professionals, a 2023 priority of the Birth Through Five Plan, "*For Our Future.*"

3. 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 is close to launch. The First Five SC team continues to work with a number of states and San Diego in supporting their work to develop portals. First Five SC will present at the PAT conference in October.