



## Meeting of the Early Childhood Advisory Council

February 15, 2024, immediately following the SC First Steps Board Meeting

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

### **AGENDA**

- I. **Call to Order and Approve Agenda** (Dr. Amy Williams)  
**Motion:** To adopt the agenda as submitted.
- II. **Meeting Minutes** (Dr. Amy Williams)  
**Motion:** To approve ECAC Minutes of December 6, 2023  
**Attachment:** December 6, 2023 Minutes
- III. **Overview of Early Childhood Integrated Data System Work for 2024** (Chelsea Richard)  
**Attachment:** Overview of Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS)
- IV. **2024 Progress Report on South Carolina's Birth Through Five Plan** (Georgia Mjartan)  
**Motion:** To approve 2024 priorities relating to *2024 Progress Report on South Carolina's Birth Through Five Plan* (requires motion and second)  
**Attachments:** Summary on 2023 Priorities for Progress Report on South Carolina's Birth Through Five Plan, 2024 Priorities for Progress Report on South Carolina's Birth Through Five Plan
- V. **Presentations and Updates from ECAC Members**
- VI. **Information**
  - a. Report from the Interagency Collaboration Committee (Karen Oliver)  
**Attachment:** ICC Recap Jan. 8, 2024
  - b. ECAC Report on Activities (Georgia Mjartan)  
**Attachment:** ECAC February 2024 Report
- VII. **Adjourn** (Dr. Amy Williams)  
**Motion:** To adjourn the meeting of the Early Childhood Advisory Council



## Early Childhood Advisory Council Meeting

December 6, 2023, immediately following the SCFS Board of Trustees Meeting  
SC First Steps  
Minutes

### **Council Members Present**

#### **(16):**

Jacque Curtin  
Mary Lynne Diggs  
John Hayes  
Sen. Greg Hembree  
Constance Holloway  
Robert Kerr  
Michael Leach  
David Lisk  
Dave Morley, Chairman

Janie Neeley  
Dorothy Priester  
Roger Pryor  
Mary Anne Scott  
Dr. Edward Simmer  
Wes Wooten  
Sue Williams

### **Council Members Absent (9)**

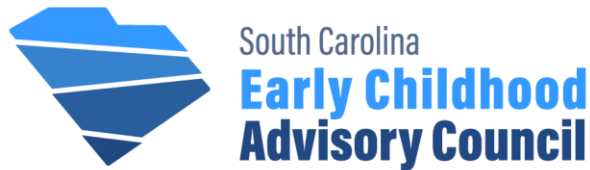
Rep. Terry Alexander  
Dr. Robert Bank  
Rep. Shannon Erickson  
Matthew Ferguson  
Jessica Mackey  
Sen. Gerald Malloy  
Jack McBride  
Dr. Amy Williams  
Dr. Brenda Williams

### **Attendees (69)**

Georgia Mjartan  
Avian Jones  
Aleigha Butler  
Amanda Bailey  
Amy Engle  
Brandie Maness  
Bresheca Funches  
Carletta Isreal  
Chastine Dickey-Jackson  
Cheryl Scales  
Cindy Ellis  
Cindy Galloway  
Donna Mason  
Dwana Doctor  
Felicia Battle  
Felicia Davis  
Gina Beebe  
Grace Avin  
Jabari Clyburn  
Jennifer Williams  
Jessica Moore  
Jon Artz  
Julie Greer  
Kathy Fitzgerald  
Kathy Miller  
Kelly Cochran

Kenya Johnson  
Kristen Martocchio  
Kristin Zeaser-Sydow  
Laura Baker  
Leah Crosby  
Lee Patterson  
Lexi Jones  
Linnie Miller  
Lis Guimaraes  
Meredith Dickens  
Parry Wright Little  
Pauletta Plowden  
Rebecca Clark  
Roddrick Dugger  
Ryan Shinn  
Samantha Ingram  
Sarah Crawford  
SheKiah Reese  
Silvia Landrum  
Stacy Greenwalt  
Tiffany Outlaw  
Tyshica McConner  
Beth Moore  
Chelsea Richard  
Kaitlyn Richards  
Mark Barnes

Derek Cromwell  
Martha Strickland  
Meghan Dyson  
Kristine Jenkins  
Kerry Cordan  
Kenna Hoover  
Kim Trudell  
Joy Mazur  
Dorian Young  
Shayla Pettigrew  
David Lisk  
Dorothy Priester  
Elizabeth Dudek  
Shelley Canright  
Myrelo King  
Tomeiko Wright  
Jovanna Lewis



The meeting began at 3:29 p.m.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to adopt the agenda. Sen. Hembree provided the motion, seconded by Ms. Neeley, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to approve the October 19, 2023 minutes. Ms. Neeley provided the motion. Mr. Kerr provided the second and the motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Diggs shared that Head Start legislation is being reviewed due to income challenges that families are facing and that it could possibly be adjusted.

Dr. Simmer announced that Danielle Wingo is the new director of DHEC's Bureau of Maternal and Child Health.

Ms. Mjartan shared that the ICC is on track with the South Carolina Birth through Five plan.

Ms. Mjartan reported on the ECAC where she shared information on the 2024 Summit on Early Childhood. She also provided a year in review on the work of the ECAC, which included highlights of the Family Voice Council and the First Five SC Toolkit.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sen. Hembree provided the motion, seconded by Dr. Simmer, and unanimously approved. The meeting ended at 3:43 pm.



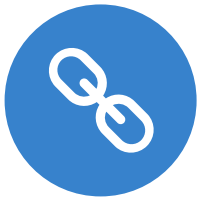
# There are 336,000+ infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in South Carolina

Knowing what is working for them matters because



early childhood experiences determine their trajectory for lifelong success

## The South Carolina Early Childhood Integrated Data System



is a groundbreaking effort to connect data across SC's early childhood programs and services and link it to K-12 data



uses sound data governance to safeguard privacy and confidentiality of data



will be a place to get answers to key questions like:

What early childhood programs, statewide, are available for eligible young children?

How many young children are there?

How many young children are eligible for early childhood programs?

How many young children are enrolled in early childhood programs?

Are those enrolled in early childhood programs on track to succeed?

What is the return on investment for early childhood programs?

# Data Governance

is the overall coordination of people and processes surrounding the use of data including:



Availability



Security



Quality

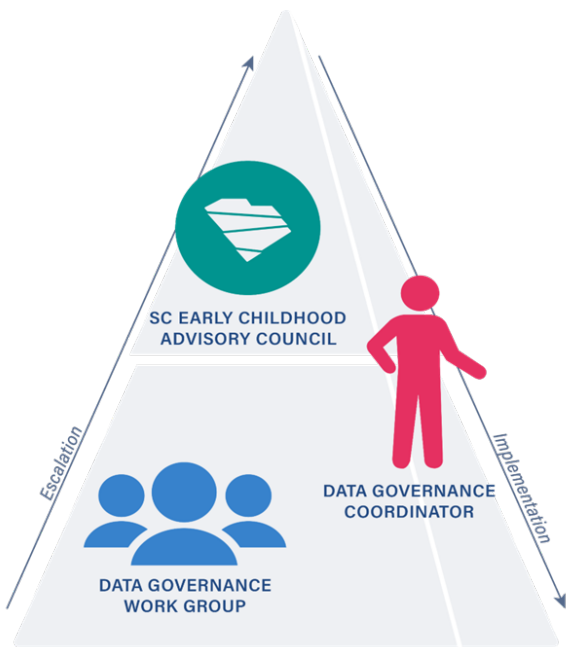


Integrity



Useability

## Early Childhood Data Governance in SC



is housed at the Early Childhood Advisory Council



is facilitated by a Data Governance Coordinator



maintains data ownership with originating agency or entity

## Current Initiatives

The **Early Learning Extension** will extend the K-12 data system to include early childhood education data for longitudinal study to increase student success and decrease achievement gaps.

The **Palmetto Drive to Five** dashboard will integrate early childhood data from the birth through five landscape of South Carolina to support data driven decision making.



**Proposed 2024 Priorities:  
for  
Progress Report on South Carolina's Birth Through Five Plan**

- 1. Increase participation in publicly funded preschool programs**  
To reduce achievement gaps, and to ensure that more eligible children are enrolled in high quality programs, increasing participation in programs must remain a priority in 2024. High quality programs include Head Start, a federally funded program, state supported programs like First Steps 4K, and state, federal and locally supported programs like public school PreK.
- 2. Collect, integrate, and share data to better understand who is served, where service gaps exist, and where to target resources and services**  
The importance of integrated data is exemplified by the complexity of pre-K enrollment. To understand where to “fill slots or build slots,” partners must collect and report data that includes all pre-K enrollments, not just those required by CERDEP legislation. A fully functioning shared and integrated data system will allow questions like these and others to be answered. Through 2024 ECAC will review and approve policies that build and support a robust integrated data system.
- 3. Expand support to help families access the services and supports they need**  
A range of initiatives are underway to understand the environment and maximize opportunities for families to obtain the program and services they need. Projects include completing a language access landscape analysis, increasing access to parenting and home visiting programs, promoting enrollment in programs like WIC and Healthy Steps, and submitting collaborative applications to finance this work.
- 4. Expand access to screening, identification of disabilities and referrals for treatment and services.**  
Early identification of delays or disabilities is essential to assuring that young children receive the treatment they need to thrive. A statewide screening registry is the first step. Assessment, referrals, and intervention then can follow.
- 5. Promote and support personal and social-skill building**  
Nurturing and responsive relationships are the foundation for resilience and good mental health. The following activities will support strong foundations: professional development that includes reflective supervision, as well as training about trauma-informed care and pyramid models; access to consultation to address challenging behaviors; and updating suspension and expulsion policies in early childhood settings.



**Summary on 2023 Priorities  
for  
Progress Report on South Carolina's Birth Through Five Plan**

- 1. Increase participation in publicly funded preschool programs.** According to the Education Oversight Committee (EOC), there are fewer children in poverty, and more four-year olds attending pre-K (CERDEP) programs. Four-year-olds living in poverty who participated in high quality programs demonstrated greater readiness on assessments compared with similar four-year-olds who did not (41% of students served in a State-funded CERDEP program were demonstrating Readiness on the KRA, compared to 27% percent of non-CERDEP pupils in poverty). However, disparities in readiness are growing. Fewer Black and Hispanic children demonstrated readiness in 2022 than in 2020, as indicated in the Measures of Progress. Increasing participation in publicly funded programs should continue as a priority through 2024.
- 2. Increase availability of quality child care, particularly in high need areas.** SC Department of Social Services (DSS) served 38,836 children in calendar year 2023 via the COVID 300 and SC Working Families child care scholarship categories. In October 2020, DSS expanded the SC Voucher program to all working parents whose household income is at or below 300% of the federal poverty level. Beginning October 1, 2023, "SC Working Families Child Care Scholarships" were made available for parents with income at or below 85% of the State Median Income (\$64,068 for a family of three).

In August 2023, DSS approved more than \$87 million in materials grants for 2,052 existing providers, funding a wide range of activities, such as classroom materials, outdoor equipment, renovations, and other improvements. DSS also developed and implemented a Startup Grants process for new child care providers in collaboration with the South Carolina Child Care Resource and Referral Network. More than 80 applicants enrolled in the Success Grant program.
- 3. Recruit and retain early education professionals.** DSS developed three initiatives to recruit and retain child care professionals. First, DSS' SC Endeavors doubled Smart Money Bonus payments for individuals who earn a credential 9/1/2023. Second, contracts were completed on January 1, 2024, with Palmetto Shared Services Alliance (PSSA) to begin providing access to services for all regulated child care programs in South Carolina. These contracts include the development of a substitute pool for programs. Finally, "SC BOO\$T", a pilot program of SC Endeavors developed a one-time wage supplement for child care teachers to help increase retention for child care employees. This pilot program will launch in February 2024.
- 4. Provide families with the ability to apply for publicly funded programs at times and in ways that meet their needs.** First Five SC was introduced in 2022. Like its predecessor, Palmetto Pre-K, First Five SC launched as an eligibility screener for publicly funded programs based on where a family lives. Since its launch in February 2022, 221,986 unique visitors went to the First Five SC website, and 23,269 (10%) completed the eligibility screener. In May 2023, First



Five SC began offering an application for many programs and services where the entered information pre-fills onto additional forms. From May through December of 2023, 1737 applications were completed.

5. **Collect, integrate, and share data to better understand who is served, where service gaps exist, and where to target resources and services.** Integrated early childhood program data helps stakeholders make informed decisions and target resources to meet the needs of South Carolina's youngest children and their families. Data sharing initiatives will make aggregate-level data publicly available, while maintaining privacy and security.



**Interagency Collaboration Committee  
Meeting Recap  
January 8, 2024**

Present: Amber Gillum, Department of Social Services; Eric Bellamy, Children’s Trust; Solandra Bowman, SC Educational Television; Jennifer Buster, Department of Health and Human Services; Mary Lynne Diggs, Head Start Collaboration Office; Abbey Duggins, Department of Education; Melanie Gambrell, Department of Mental Health; Constance Holloway, Department of Disabilities and Special Needs; Jennifer Jaques, Department of Disabilities and Special Needs; Berry Kelly, Department of Health and Environmental Control; Georgia Mjartan, SC First Steps/ECAC; Anita Ellison-Porter, Department of Mental Health; Kristen Shealy, Department of Health and Environmental Control

Absent: Leesa Aiken, SC State Library; Matthew Ferguson, Department of Education; Louise Johnson, Department of Mental Health; Rusty Monhollon, Commission on Higher Education

ECAC Staff: Laura Baker, Roddrick Dugger, Rachal Hatton-Moore, Karen Oliver, Chelsea Richard

**WELCOME**

ICC Chair, Amber Gillum, convened the meeting at SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs.

**BIRTH THROUGH FIVE PLAN**

The group discussed the Birth through Five Plan and its companions, the 2023 and the upcoming 2024 Progress Reports. To complete the 2024 Progress Report, updates about the 2023 priorities must be completed. ECAC staff will follow up with specific partners as necessary to report updates.

The group agreed to propose the following priorities for 2024 to the ECAC:

**1. Increase participation in publicly funded preschool programs** (continued from 2023). To reduce achievement gaps, and to ensure that more eligible children are enrolled in high quality programs, increasing participation in programs must remain a priority in 2024.

**2. Collect, integrate, and share data to better understand who is served, where service gaps exist, and where to target resources and services** (continued from 2023). The importance of integrated data is exemplified by the complexity of pre-K enrollment. To understand where to “fill slots or build slots,” partners must collect and report data that includes all pre-K enrollments, not just those required by CERDEP legislation. A fully functioning shared and integrated data system will allow questions like these to be answered.

The group also discussed the importance of referencing other data sets, like those included the Palmetto Drive to Five. There may be funding and project opportunities to explore related to collaborative data collection and sharing

**3. Expand support to help families access the services and supports they need** (Plan Objective 2.2.2)

A range of initiatives are underway to understand the environment and maximize opportunities

for families to obtain the programs and services they need. Projects include, completing a language-access landscape analysis, increasing access to parenting and home-visiting programs, promoting enrollment in programs like WIC and Healthy Steps, and submitting collaborative applications to finance this work.

**4. Expand access to screening, identification of disabilities and referrals for treatment and Services** (Plan Objective 1.3.1).

Early identification of delays or disabilities is essential to assuring that young children receive the treatment they need to thrive. A statewide screening registry is the first step.

**5. Promote and support personal and social skill-building** (Plan Objective 1.4.1)

Nurturing and responsive relationships are the foundation for resilience and good mental health. The following activities will support strong foundations: professional development that includes reflective supervision, trauma-informed care and pyramid models; access to consultation to address challenging behaviors; and updating suspension and expulsion policies and informing legislation in early childhood settings.

The group noted that heightened awareness has surfaced more need for training, supports and intervention.

To assure that the Birth through Five Plan is a collaborative project, ICC will review data sources used in the 2022 plan. The group will determine if the data sources should be changed, or if others should be added.

**ICC UPDATES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The State Legislature convenes January 9. ICC members are encouraged to share information with each other (one pagers and infographics) that their respective agencies may be sharing. Knowing the talking points of partners supports coordination and collaboration. For example, a Joint Committee to Study Child Care is convening. Amber Gillum offered to share information with ICC that DSS is sharing with the Committee.

Are there messages that ICC might want to co-create to share with stakeholders? Potential subjects include home visiting, Palmetto PreK and food security.

The group will meet the first Monday in March, March 4, at 9:30 AM. DDSN again will host the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 AM.



## Report on Early Childhood Advisory Council Activities February 2024

### **Accountability, Research Strategy, and Data Governance**

#### For Our Future: South Carolina's Birth through Five Plan

The ECAC will review progress on 2023 priorities of the SC Birth through Five Plan and approve priorities for 2024. A 2024 Birth through Five Plan Progress Report will be ready for dissemination in March.

#### Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS)

Chelsea Richard, Director of Research and Strategy at the ECAC, is currently serving as the interim Data Governance Coordinator. With the support of national consultants and members of the ECIDS data governance work groups, thirteen policies have been identified, to date, that will need to be brought to the ECAC for consideration this calendar year, starting at the April meeting.

### **Family Centered Practice**

#### Family Voice Council (FVC)

Currently, 14 parents and caregivers represent the FVC. Six member terms ended 12/31/23 and were replaced by new members in January 2024. Recruitment is underway for six unfilled seats for the 2024 term.

Members and alum of the Family Voice Council attended the summit on December 7, 2023. The Family Voice Council led content curation for the 2023 SC Summit on Early Childhood, and six members and alum opened the day with a Family Voice Spotlight.

The first meeting of the year was January 19, and members identified behavior management training for early care and education professionals, suspension and expulsion, and child care availability as priority concerns currently impacting families.

### **Streamlined Access to Services**

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

- The number four will be the focus of **Pre-K Enrollment Day** (4/4 for 4K), a statewide social media blitz on April 4 to boost awareness and promote the importance of preschool for our state's four-year-olds. Since 2021, the state's early childhood education supporters have participated by sharing on social media a unified graphic and message for the day.
- Palmetto PreK website: February 1, 2020 – January 31, 2024
  - Unique website visitors: 217,215
  - Total leads: 28,049
  - Eligible for at least one program: 22,897
  - Head Start eligible: 11,329
  - Public School eligible: 9,628
  - First Steps 4K eligible: 7,251

- SC DSS Working Families Child Care Scholarship eligible: 4,059

### First Five SC

- Training for providers began October 30, 2023, and will continue through February 2024 for a total of 11 planned trainings. Through the January 11 training, there have been 156 attendees. A recording of the training has been created and will be available for future use with groups of direct service providers and posted to the First Five SC training site.
- First Five SC Website: February 1, 2022 – December 31, 2023
  - Unique website visitors: 221,986
  - Total leads: 18,187
- First Five SC Applications: May 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023  
Total Applications Received: 1,947  
*By program:*
  - First Steps Local Partnerships: 819
  - SC Child Care Scholarships: 647
  - WIC: 397
  - First Steps 4K: 84

### First Five for All

- First Five team working on a three-year grant to support similar portals in other states or large municipalities
- Completed a microsite, <http://first5forall.org/>, and tool kit in September.
  - To date, representatives from 33 states downloaded the First Five toolkit
  - 17 consultants and representatives from national organizations, like National Center for Children in Poverty also have downloaded the toolkit.
- In less than one year, 14 states and two large municipalities have had at least one meeting with First Five team about how an eligibility and application portal could be developed.

### **Field Building and Professional Development**

The 2023 SC Summit on Early Childhood was held in Columbia, December 7. More than 400 parents, state leaders, early childhood professionals and advocates participated in a full day of learning, sharing, and connecting. Plenaries with renowned speakers Dr. Raquel Hatter, Kresge Foundation, and Dr. Matt Biel and Arrealia Gavins, Georgetown University, as well as expert-led sessions, explored the two-generation approach which focuses on success for both children and the adults in their lives.

More than 700 early childhood educators of 4-year-olds have reserved their spot to attend the March 1 Spring **Palmetto Pre-K Jamboree**. The no-cost registration, virtual conference will feature keynote speaker Tonya Byous and state-level experts presenting on the theme, Emotional Development: Rooted in Self-regulation.