



Meeting of the Early Childhood Advisory Council

June 15, 2023, immediately following the SC First Steps Board Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83722694987?pwd=dDhVLzlMYkRPMHIPYktkb0NwbFgzUT09>

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 April 20, 2023
Attachment: April 20, 2023, Minutes

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

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

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



Early Childhood Advisory Council Meeting

April 20, 2023, immediately following the SCFS Board of Trustees Meeting
SC First Steps
Draft Minutes

Trustees Present (14):

Rep. Terry Alexander	Roger Pryor
Dr. Shelley Canright, Vice Chair	Edward Simmer
Jacque Curtin	Wes Wooten
Matthew Ferguson	Sue Williams
John Hayes	Dr. Amy Williams
Sen. Greg Hembree	
Tim Holt	
Michael Leach	
Dave Morley, Chairman	

Trustees Absent (8)

Mary Lynne Diggs
Rep. Shannon Erickson
Constance Holloway
Robert Kerr
Jesica Mackey
Sen. Gerald Malloy
Janie Neeley
Alexia Newman

Attendees (51)

Georgia Mjartan	Joy Mazur	Myrelo King
Avian Jones	Kathy Fitzgerald	
Cindy Riley	Kenna Hoover	
Tangela Green	Kristine Jenkins	
Derek Cromwell	LaMyra Sanders	
Sarah Crawford	Lexi Jones	
Sheila Cornwell	Olandor Lewis	
Chelsea Richard	Pauline Whiting	
Leeza Steward	Sharon Bruton	
Santasha Highley	Shayla Pettigrew	
Loretta Parker	Sherri Evans	
Kaitlyn Richards	Tamatha Kohler	
Jackson Wilkens	Vanessa Harrell	
Laura Baker	Deborah Mitchell	
Rachal Hatton	Birley Wright	
Lis Guimaraes	Nur Tanyel	
Berry Kelly	Glennis McElveen	
Brandie Maness	Mark Barnes	
Carletta Isreal	Martha Strickland	
Cindy Dixon	Betty Gardiner	
Cindy Galloway	Beth Moore	
Dorian Young	Karen Oliver	
Hannah Hayes	Rachal Hatton	
James Calhoun	Lis Guimaraes	
Jennifer Williams	Laura Baker	



The meeting began at 3:12 p.m.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to adopt the agenda. Dr. Canright provided the motion. Dr. Simmer provided a second and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to approve the February 16, 2023 minutes. Dr. Williams provided the motion. Mr. Leach provided the second and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to approve the following consent agenda. Sen. Hembree provided the motion, seconded by Dr. Williams, and unanimously approved.

Consent Item: Motion Recommended by Executive Committee (Dave Morley)

- a. **Motion:** To update the SC Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) onboarding process: ECAC staff in collaboration with workgroup partners will develop and implement steps to engage new partners. The process will ensure data are integrated, used in compliance with partners' rules and regulations, and assure privacy and confidentiality (Executive Committee recommends)

Ms. Mjartan shared a proposed amendment to For Our Future: South Carolina's Birth through Five Plan. After some discussion Dr. Williams provided a motion to integrate the PDG plan in *For Our Future*, amend language in Objective 2.4, and to insert Strategy 2.4.5 to address transportation such that these changes state:

Objective 2.4: South Carolina's communities provide children with healthy environments, enriching opportunities, sufficient transportation, and community resources like libraries, schools, outdoor learning environments, community centers and museums.

Strategy 2.4.5, "Expand transportation services for families so they can access services and enriching experiences." (requires motion and second)

Dr. Simmer provided the second and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Gillum provided a progress report on the SC Birth through Five Strategic Plan and discussed the 2023 priorities relating to the progress report. Mr. Morley asked for a motion to approve the 2023 priorities relating to *2023 Progress Report on South Carolina's Birth Through Five Plan*. Dr. Canright provided the motion, Ms. Williams seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Sarah Crawford, Project Manager, and Sheila Cornwell, Business Analyst from SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs, provided an update on the progress of the Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) via the Palmetto Drive to Five Data Dashboard. They shared how data will be collected from participating agencies and displayed in the portal.

Mr. Leach shared that DSS is awaiting guidance regarding the executive order around expanding access to affordable high-quality care. Ms. Williams thanked the local partnerships that participated in raising awareness for Child Abuse Prevention month. Dr. Simmer shared information on the latest annual infant mortality report that was released by DHEC.



Ms. Mjartan provided information on the Palmetto Pre-K portal. She shared that SC First Steps is working with other states to assist them with building out portals similar to First5SC and Palmetto Pre-K. She provided event information for the launch of the First5 Common Application on March 1, 2023.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sen. Hembree provided the motion, seconded by Mr. Pryor, and unanimously approved. The meeting ended at 4:03 p.m.



Interagency Collaboration Committee Meeting Recap May 1, 2023

Present: Leesa Aiken, SC State Library; Eric Bellamy, Children's Trust; Solandra Bowman, SC Educational Television; Jennifer Buster, Department of Health and Human Services; Georgia Mjartan, SC First Steps/ECAC; Rusty Monhollon, Commission on Higher Education; Bill Simpson, Department of Disabilities and Special Needs

Absent: Amber Gillum, Department of Social Services; Mary Lynne Diggs, Head Start Collaboration Office; Matthew Ferguson, Department of Education; Louise Johnson, Department of Mental Health; Brannon Traxler, Department of Health and Environmental Control

Guests: Abbey Duggins, Department of Education; Kimberly Seals, Department of Health and Environmental Control

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

Call to Order and Welcome

ICC Chair, Amber Gillum, was not able to attend and Georgia Mjartan convened the meeting. Ms. Mjartan thanked SC State Library Director, Leesa Aiken, for hosting the event.

Update from ECAC Board Meeting April 20

Ms. Mjartan provided an update about the Birth through Five Plan Status Report. Since 2022, ICC members have worked in small groups to identify significant achievements and select priorities for the next year. In late December a (second) Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five planning grant was awarded to SC Department of Social Services (SC DSS). The grant required updates to the needs assessment and strategic plan and to prioritize efforts to recruit and retain the child care workforce. These grant requirements were integrated into the Birth through Five Plan Status Report. The ICC discussed the requirements in a called meeting in early April. Later in the month, the Early Childhood Advisory Council approved an integration of the Preschool Development Grant strategic plan into the Birth through Five Plan, added a strategy specifically focused on transportation, and approved the five priorities at its April meeting.

Birth through Five Plan Priorities: Plans into Action

ICC members briefly discussed where they and their agencies could be involved in work relating to the priorities. Below, each priority is listed, and the ICC members or their agencies are identified.

1. **Increase participation in publicly funded preschool programs.** Department of Education, Head Start, Department of Social Services and First Steps have significant roles to play in increasing pre-K participation in programs. The 2022 workgroup will reconvene. Salandra Bowman, SCETV, will join the group.
2. **Increase availability of quality child care, particularly in high need areas.**
3. **Recruit and retain early education professionals.** Priorities 2 and 3 are the focus of a workgroup convened through the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five. Rusty Monhollon, Commission on Higher Education will participate in this group.
4. **Provide families with the ability to apply for publicly funded programs at times and in ways that meet their needs.** This priority is related to First Five SC. Immediately following the

May ICC meeting, a press conference announces the launch of First Five's common application. Bringing additional partners into the common application is a priority for the remainder of the year. Children's Trust's family engagement programs are slated to be integrated into the application this summer.

5. **Collect, integrate, and share data to better understand who is served, where service gaps exist, and where to target resources and services.** Revenue and Fiscal Affairs (RFA) is working to develop an early childhood data dashboard. The project is funded with Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five funds. Children's Trust plans to share data with RFA for integration into the early childhood system in the near future.

ICC Updates and Opportunities

More than 1800 children participated in the 2023 READ-In hosted by the SC State Library. SCETV supported the program by livestreaming the event to classrooms that could not participate in person.

The federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program was reauthorized for five years. New planning is underway.

Two reports relating to maternal morbidity and infant mortality were recently released by DHEC. The results report increases in both maternal and infant deaths. Most of these deaths are preventable. SCETV screened Birth Justice, a documentary the experiences and challenges of Black women, their families, caretakers, and advocates, and examines the structures and systems that determine disparate rates of mortality. It was suggested that the ICC health workgroup convene around this issue.

Legislation impacting SC First Steps and the ECAC was reviewed. First Steps would be permanently authorized. Department of Mental Health would be included on the First Steps and ECAC boards. Some (ECAC) data sharing and reporting responsibilities would be strengthened.

First Five SC was presented to 14 states through the Hunt Institute. A number of states are interested in learning about the development of an eligibility and application portal.

Setting ICC Meeting Dates: September and November

The next meeting of the ICC will be Tuesday, September 12, at 1:00 PM. ICC members indicated an interest in a virtual option. ICC will meet on Tuesdays through the remainder of the calendar year.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 AM



Report on Early Childhood Advisory Council Activities June 15, 2023

2023 Progress Report on South Carolina's Birth Through Five Plan

The report will be available on the ECAC website (www.earlychildhoodsc.org).

- ECAC updated the Birth through Five Plan to include transportation in Objective 2.4 of the plan and add Strategy 2.45. A summary of state agency effectivities relating to transportation, [Transportation Resources, 0-5](#), is included in meeting materials.
- [Birth through Five Plan 2023 Priorities: Operational Plan](#)
The operational plan is included in meeting materials.

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

- **Website: Feb. 1, 2020 – May 31, 2023**
 - Unique website visitors: 175,670
 - Total leads: 23,678
 - Eligible for at least one program: 19,256
 - Head Start eligible: 9,662
 - Public school eligible: 8,732
 - First Steps 4K eligible: 6,329
 - SC DSS Child Care Scholarship Program eligible: 3,428

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

First Five SC launched the common application on May 1, 2023. A public event to celebrate the launch was held at the SC State Library. The public launch received notable media attention, including interviews with SC Family Voice Council Member Ashley Berendzen.

- **Website: February 1, 2022 – May 31, 2023**
 - Unique Visitors: 137,639
 - Unique Leads: 12,912
 - Pageview: 309,848
- **Applications: May 1, 2023 – May 31, 2023**
 - Total Applications Received: 342
By program:
 - First Steps 4K: 8
 - WIC: 63
 - SC Child Care Scholarships: 114
 - First Steps Local Partnerships: 157
Local Partnerships applications represented 272 children. The largest percentage of applications was for children birth to age one. Fifty-nine percent of applications were submitted after business hours.

Family Voice Council (FVC)

Currently, 18 parents and caregivers represent the FVC. One member joined in February; one member's term ended in March. Ten members have second terms ending in July. The Two-gen Coordinator and FVC members are recruiting new FVC members. Several candidates are being considered.

SC Early Childhood Integrated Data System

- Early Learning Extension Data Governance Workgroup: The workgroup will meet in-person this July to map how partners will answer the question, “How many young children are enrolled in early childhood education programs (through Head Start, Department of Education, DSS Child Care Scholarships, SC First Steps 4K)?”
- Palmetto Drive to Five Data Governance Workgroup: This work group is also working to answer the question, “How many young children are enrolled in early childhood programs?” Palmetto Drive to Five includes data from other early childhood programs and services that are not part of the Early Learning Extension.

Grants

- Alliance for Early Success
On May 18 the Alliance for Early Success hosted a webinar, “Making Government Work for Families: How states can Prioritize the Customer Experience for Families Accessing Publicly Funded Services.” The webinar featured New Practice Lab and First Five SC. New Practice Lab shared research on complexity in early education programs across the 50 states. New Practice Lab also provided updates on federal efforts to simplify access to early childhood programs. First Five SC was featured as one state’s response to system complexity, offering families access to publicly funded programs and services in a manner that reduces many barriers to service. More than 200 people from 25 states participated in the webinar.
- Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B5)
 1. PDG B5 funds substantially support ECAC staff and work, including Palmetto PreK and First Five SC. SC DSS, the lead agency, and its partners were recently granted no-cost extensions through April 2024. The evaluation team learned and reported:
 - PDG B5 helped to create greater awareness of the complexity of the ECE system.
 - PDG B5 funding and activities supported and strengthened other initiatives in the early childhood system. For example, PDG activities encouraged provider participation in child care quality programs and the SC Endeavors registry. The Drive to Five Data Governance Work Group is part of the South Carolina Early Childhood Integrated Data System, which also includes data integration activities with the Department of Education’s Early Learning Extension.
 2. South Carolina was awarded a new PDG B5 Planning Grant in late December 2022. Like the first PDG B5 award, SC DSS serves as the lead agency and SC First Steps provides the match. Recent accomplishments include:
 - The Research, Evaluation and Measurement Center completed [Early Childhood Education Program and Workforce Needs Assessment](#). Data from this assessment was submitted to the Administration for Children and Families, the PDG B5 federal funder. The report is posted on the ECAC website.
 - The PDG B5 Workforce Workgroup, led by DSS and SC Endeavors, is developing a workforce recruitment and retention plan that incorporates strategies using multiple funding streams.
- Pritzker Children’s Initiative– Support State and Local Leaders to Build Comprehensive Early Childhood System Portals
 1. ECAC presented information about First Five SC during three webinars in April and May
 - i. 200+ participants were counted, and represented more than 25 states
 2. ECAC in conversations with Delaware, San Diego, Texas, Utah, and Vermont

TRANSPORTATION

RESOURCES 0-5

MAY 15, 2023

OVERVIEW

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

- Covers Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) to eligible Medicaid members to medical care or services that are covered and medically necessary
- Escorts required for under the age of 14
- Monthly average of 3,987 legs (rides) (April 2020-2023)

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

- No response received from DMH
- Clients may use NEMT to access services

DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG ABUSE SERVICES

- Provides gas cards, taxis, and bus reimbursements to 301s based on individual needs of the clients
- Children may accompany to group sessions as needed
- No formal contracts with transportation companies

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

- Transportation is available for children who are in foster care but are limited to ISEDEC eligible children and youth. Allowances are limited to two transports per month
- When participating in education and training programs, SNAP recipients may be eligible for assistance with transportation supports, including gas vouchers, bus tickets, and stipends. The specific amount of support provided may vary depending on the need and the frequency of travel.
- TANF are eligible for assistance on an individual basis and level of need

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

- Do not offer transportation services
- Clients may benefit from Medicaid NEMT

DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITY AND SPECIAL NEEDS

- Offer limited transportation to and from day treatment services
- Individual and family support funds can be used but limited to non-waiver participants
- Managed by each case manager

South Carolina's Birth Through Five Plan 2023 Priorities

Operational Plan

The Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) identified a set of priorities that will significantly impact the lives of young children and their families in 2023. These priorities are both ambitious and essential, requiring the active participation and collaboration of the ECAC and its partners to be fully implemented.

1. Increase participation in publicly funded preschool programs

- Key Drivers:** Palmetto PreK Committee
Department of Education, First Steps, Head Start, Department of Social Services
- Tactics:** Study reasons why eligible families do not participate in preschool programs
Determine where and how participation can be increased

2. Increase availability of quality child care, particularly in high need areas

- Key Driver:** Department of Social Services
- Tactics:** Offer start-up grants for new providers
Offer grants to current providers for quality improvements
Develop substitute teacher pool program

3. Recruit and retain early education professionals

- Key Driver:** Preschool Development Grant Workforce Workgroup
- Tactics:** Provide bonuses, scholarships, credentialing opportunities and other compensation incentives
Expand and update articulation agreements between higher education institutions
Support early educators through training, coaching and consultation

4. Provide families with the ability to apply for publicly funded programs at times and in ways that meet their needs

- Key Drivers:** ECAC Partners
- Tactics:** Increase the breadth of programs available on the common application, including through the addition of Children's Trust partners
Pilot local integration of school district early childhood programs, Head Start, and Early Head Start

5. Collect, integrate, and share data to better understand who is served, where service gaps exist, and where to target resources and services

- Key Drivers:** Early Learning Extension and Palmetto Drive to Five Data Governance Work Groups
- Tactics:** Launch the Palmetto Drive to 5 dashboard
Review Kindergarten Assessment Data presented by the Education Oversight Committee
Define and begin process to collect data that will answer the question "How many children are enrolled in early childhood programs?"