



Child Care Taskforce Meeting

September 21st, 2021

Taskforce Members Present:

- Commissioner Clarence Carter (DHS)
- Commissioner Jeff McCord (DLWD)
- Jamie Stitt: Designee for Commissioner Bob Rolfe (DECD)
- Misty Moody: Designee for Commissioner Penny Schwinn (Education)
- Dr. Tobi Amosun: Designee for Commissioner Lisa Piercely (TDH)
- Senator Becky Massey
- Representative Patsy Hazelwood
- Phil Accord
- Pat Sheehy
- Chloe Moore
- Blair Taylor

Staff Present:

- Trevor Lauri
- Cherrell Campbell-Street
- Jude White
- Eric Dunn
- Krisann Hodges
- Adam Nickas
- Allie Jones
- Dana Glenn
- Dr. Kelley Nichols
- Gary Wilson
- Lee Harrell
- Melisa Hucks
- Michelle Joyner
- Nicole Smith
- Suzanne Carr

Taskforce Members

Absent:

- N/A

2:00 p.m. Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Carter called the meeting to order once it was ascertained that a quorum was present.

General Counsel Hodges started by going through the meeting structure, group structure, and deliverables. The Taskforce is to develop a strategic action plan around accessibility to affordable and quality childcare, hire and oversee a consultant, and identify resources that could be coordinated more effectively. An interim report is due July 1, 2022, and a final report is due December 31, 2022.

2:10 p.m. Purpose of the Task Force & Legislative Introductions

Senator Massey stated her intentions as making sure Departments aren't working in silos, but blending and braiding services. It was important for the average citizen needing childcare to be able to easily access it and understand the process. She stated the need to look at these issues from the consumer-up.

Rep. Hazelwood had to exit the WebEx due to bad service.

Commissioner Carter noted that the design of the system is program-centric, and there is a need to invert the approach to go through the consumer to the program. Tennessee can be an example of the need to take a horizontal approach.

2:19 p.m. Child Care Transformation – White Paper Recap

AC White presented the White Paper as years' worth of work to improve quality and accessibility to childcare. This was to help everyone start from a common ground. She reviewed the Child Care services and her three primary goals: improve quality, increase access, and strengthen business efficiency.

AC White discussed the different ways that Child Care had engaged stakeholders including providers, DHS staff, and families utilizing their services.

AC White presented ways in which they are helping employers to provide child care for their employees and the new Pre-Licensure Support Unit within Child Care and Community Services at TDHS. The new unit is tasked with streamlining processes and increasing support for childcare providers.

AC White presented the new partnership between DHS and ECD and local development districts to expand the state's network of child care facilities and discussed Establishment and Expansion Grants. As of October 1, 2021, licensed agencies can apply for up to \$1000 per slot of licensed capacity to be created. This can be used for furniture, supplies, materials, and curriculum. The American Rescue Plan Act is the source of the funding.

AC White discussed the transformation processes that CC&CS has undergone. This includes a staff reorganization, QRIS redesign, and technology modernization.

AC White informed the group of several changes that go into effect on October 1, 2021. These include a 10% overall rate increase for all categories of care, 15% rate differential for serving children with disabilities or special needs, inclusion of technical assistance and coaching to increase the ability to serve children with special needs or disabilities, increasing salary supplement program for child care workers, the Tech Goes Home program, and Establishment/Expansion Grants.

2:53 p.m. Task Force Discussion

Senator Massey provided a comment from Rep. Hazelwood that child care is a critical issue and a good way to get Tennesseans, especially women, back to work.

Senator Massey asked if TDHS has ever surveyed or had meetings w/ consumers to find out what their barriers are? She also informed AC White that a group in Knoxville asked if there was a delay in SMART Steps vouchers. AC White stated that she will look into the second question. Deputy Campbell-Street reviewed the ways that TDHS has engaged with stakeholders to find out their needs in answer to the first question.

Commissioner Carter noted that one of the challenges is how you extend yourself geometrically as you continue to serve, and that government cannot do this by itself; it takes a whole-of-Tennessee approach to this issue.

Blair Taylor stated she looks forward to hearing more about the process of hiring a contractor to support the task force's work. Perhaps this should be a part of the next meeting, around what the scope of work will be. Deputy Commissioner Hucks updated the group that they have developed the scope of work and it is in legal review. It will go next to DGS Central Procurement Office. They expect a 60-90 day process for the RFP. It will go out to bid, and a team will evaluate those bids. The award will be issued after evaluation.

Patrick Sheehy stated that the group should think about themselves as a workgroup. For the interim and final report, the group will need the consultant first because that will drive the strategic action plan. One of the first things to do is get vice-chairs elected. He requested that the following items be made available to the Taskforce: PC474, slide deck, a roster of who is on the task force, a summary of points for complying with public meetings law from General Counsel, and a meeting plan/dates on calendars. Commissioner Carter responded that he will make sure all of those items are in a post-meeting packet.

Chole Moore requested the group make sure there's a system of terms and common language, understanding that the group comes from different backgrounds and priorities. She emphasized that learning about systems change work happening across the nation would benefit the group. She inquired what the buckets the group will focus on are and wants to make sure we have time to ensure a shared vision.

AC White provided her email in the chat. Any topics members want to discuss in later meetings, please send to AC White.

Blair Taylor requested AC White walk the Taskforce through the major changes and proposed changes to the QRIS system at an upcoming meeting.

Commissioner Carter noted that legislative leadership could extend the sunset of the Taskforce if needed.

Krisann will go over open records/open meetings laws at the next meeting.

Commissioner Carter put off the election of vice-chairs until the next meeting when the Taskforce is full and in-person. There will be a full meeting schedule when the group convenes next.

3:34 p.m. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:34 p.m. The next Child Care Task Force meeting will take place at a time TBD.