



*The Coalition's Mission is to provide leadership and advocacy that builds a community
where all children are prepared for success in school*

Program Policy and Strategy Committee Meeting

Wednesday, September 2, 2009

9:00am – 11:00am

Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend Region

325 John Knox Road, Building B, Suite 120, Tallahassee, FL 32303

Committee Members Present:

Dr. Elsie Burton, Chair
Traci Leavine
Linda Nelson
Maria Pouncey
Jeremy Cohen
Jeanne Barker
Ed Feather
Sarah Glass
Shelia Shelton

Staff Present:

Chris Duggan, Chief Executive Officer
Lauren Faison, Chief Operating Officer
Sam Sweazy, Vice President of Program Services
Megan Gocs, Executive Assistant

Committee Members Absent:

Lesia Johnson
Catie McRae

1. Welcome and Roll Call

Dr. Elsie Burton, Chair, welcomed committee members and staff. Roll call was taken and quorum was established at 9:03am.

2. Approval of Agenda

The motion to approve the agenda for this meeting was made by Shelia Shelton. This motion was seconded by Traci Leavine. This motion was approved.

3. Approval of Minutes for May 20, 2009

The motion to approve the minutes for the Program Policy and Strategy Committee Meeting of May 20, 2009, was made by Traci L. This motion was seconded by Shelia S. This motion was approved.

4. Public Comment

Chris Duggan received an email from Sharon Hathcock, the Taylor County Pre-Kindergarten Coordinator, which she presented to the committee as public comment. This letter is relevant to the prioritization of the waitlist for School Readiness Services. Chris D. read this email to the committee.

5. Action Items

a. Modification to Gold Seal Policy: Adding July 1st Deadline for Payment for Gold Seal Services

Until December 2008, the Board of the Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend Region did not have a formal policy addressing Gold Seal payments for contracted child care providers. The Board has now reviewed the Gold Seal Program and has approved a policy that sets guidelines for providers participating in the Gold Seal Program. The policy states that each year the Board will review Gold Seal payments as part of the normal budgeting process.

During the budget development process, a need was identified for an amendment to the Gold Seal policy specifying a period for providers to qualify to receive Gold Seal payments. Effective July 1, 2009, in order to be considered for Gold Seal payment during the next fiscal year, providers must obtain their Gold Seal certification by July 1 of the current year. Providers must also obtain their Gold Seal certificate from the Department of Children and Families and provide it to the Coalition prior to July 1 to also be eligible for payments during the fiscal year. This will ensure the availability of funds and will facilitate a more effective budgeting process. Any provider obtaining Gold Seal certification during the fiscal year, would not be eligible to receive Gold Seal payments until the following enrollment period.

Ed Feaver questioned whether the Department of the Children and Families acts promptly in issuing Gold Seal certificates. Both Sam Sweazy and Lauren Faison told the committee that from their experience, the Department of Children and Families usually processes and issues Gold Seal certificates fairly quickly.

The motion to approve the modification to the Gold Seal policy, adding July 1st for payment for Gold Seal services, was made by Ed F. This motion was seconded by Shelia S. This motion was approved.

6. Update

a. Quality Improvement System

Lauren F. provided the committee with an update in relation to the Coalition's Quality Improvement System (QIS).

The purpose of the Coalition's QIS is to increase the availability of quality child care programs and to provide additional information to better inform families on how to make informed decisions when selecting a child care program.

During this past fiscal year, the Coalition piloted the QIS rating system with thirty seven providers, who volunteered to be part of the pilot project. Providers completed program assessments, improvement steps, and the star rating process. Participating providers had positive feedback about the process and made suggestions for improvement.

Participation in the Coalition's QIS project this fiscal year is completely voluntary. Upon signing the Provider Network Agreement at the beginning of the fiscal year, providers must indicate their willingness to participate in the project. Out of the one hundred and ninety-six School Readiness providers contracted with the Coalition for this fiscal year, one hundred and twenty three providers chose to participate in the QIS.

Staff are currently in the process of completing stage one of pre-assessments and the development of program improvement plans. Between October and December 2009, staff will be undertaking stage two, the implementation of the program improvement plans. Between December 2009 and March 2010, staff will be performing stage three, the post-assessments. Each provider choosing to partake in the QIS, will then be assigned a program rating. After receiving this update on the QIS, the committee discussed this item further.

7. Discussion Items

a. Prioritization of Waitlist for School Readiness Services

The current prioritization of the waitlist for School Readiness services is for, children at risk of welfare dependency, TANF referrals from our local Workforce partners, children at risk of abuse or neglect, and then children from working families whose income does not exceed one hundred and fifty percent of the federal poverty level with the following as priorities, zero to five year olds, school-age siblings who have zero to five olds enrolled and six to eight year old school-age children.

Historically, the Coalition has operated on a first come, first served basis when enrolling off the waitlist for services. Therefore, eligible customers who have been on the waitlist the longest, would be enrolled first when funding is available, if they are still eligible.

There are a number of variables that make each family on the waitlist unique, including, purpose for care and age of children. These factors are not currently considered when placing a family on the waitlist. A family's placement on the waitlist is strictly based on the timing of their inquiry.

The committee then discussed the prioritization of the waitlist for School Readiness services further. The committee suggested having a points system for the waitlist. Ed F. questioned how serious the problem is. Staff informed the committee that the current system has on the most part worked over the years. Where the Coalition has run into challenges, is when the waitlist runs over seven hundred, then managing the waitlist becomes a problem.

The committee suggested making it the parents responsibility to confirm every two months that they are still eligible for Coalition services. If parents did not get back to us, they would drop off the waitlist. Currently, parents need to re-secure their place on the waitlist every six months, otherwise their name would drop off.

It was agreed by this committee to discuss this matter further, when more information is in hand.

8. Further Discussion

Lauren F. explained the Co-op Program currently being undertaken by the Coalition's Department of Provider Services to the committee. Providers pay \$10.00 per month, per bag, to receive a bag of materials with lesson plans, activities, curriculum and online training modules which they can complete for one hour of in service training. Providers are provided with a wealth of information and activities which they can use in their centers and turn into lesson plans and activities for their children. Currently one hundred and thirty providers through our seven county service area are enrolled in the Co-op Program.

Ed F. requested a list of providers that are currently partaking in the Co-op Program.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30am.

Minutes recorded by: _____
Megan Gocs, Executive Assistant

Minutes Approved: Thursday, February 18, 2010

Committee Chair's Initials: _____

Board Secretary Initials: _____

A digital recording of this meeting is available at the office of the Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend Region.