

CHILD CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

May 9, 2023

7:00 p.m.

Fairfax County Government Center Conference Room 4/5

MEMBERS PRESENT	Wynne Busman, Elizabeth Cassidy, Mercedes Dash, Evelyn Evans, Valerie Inman, Monica Jackson, Gita D'Souza Kumar, Scott Stroh
MEMBERS ABSENT	Kerry O' Brien, Janet Reimer
STAFF PRESENT	Keisha Dotson, Suzanne Ritchie

Call to Order

Scott Stroh, Chair, called the May 9, 2023, Child Care Advisory Council meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. Members and staff introduced themselves.

Review of Minutes

The April 11, 2023, meeting minutes were reviewed, and approved. Motion to approve without any changes was made by Gita D'Souza Kumar, seconded by Mercedes Dash, and passed unanimously.

Summer Meeting Schedule

There was a brief group discussion about the meeting calendar for 2023 and the summer meeting schedule. The consensus was that the Council Members would still like to take a recess from meeting in July and August. After the Council's next meeting in June, they will readjourn in September.

Follow up discussion from April 11 meeting

Keisha Dotson shared a snapshot of data for permitted vs. licensed childcare providers in Fairfax County. There has been a slight decline in the number of childcare providers. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 there were 861 county permits vs. 724 county permits in FY 2023. The number of state licenses for FY 2023 is 533. Survey results from providers indicated that the non-renewal numbers could be due to providers entering retirement, transitioning to state licenses, and closing their businesses. Monica Jackson said the numbers suggest that not as many providers left the field when looking at FY 2022 and FY 2023. Keisha shared that in FY 2020 there were 550 state licensed providers compared with 547 in FY 2021 and 532 in FY 2022. **Scott Stroh said he was interested in seeing the overlay of the geographical map with the vulnerability index and asked if it was possible to determine the number of children in Fairfax County (at a point in time). Wynne Busman asked for the number of children in subsidized care.** She mentioned that the decrease in subsidies for providers could be due to providers who have left the field, or it could be that providers no longer want to participate in subsidies.

Keisha asked Council Members if they would be interested in a more in-depth presentation from NCS staff in the Early Childhood Education office. The consensus from the group is that they would be interested, and all agreed that the June CCAC meeting will be dedicated to this presentation with a Q& A session to follow afterwards. **Keisha will send the PowerPoint presentation slides ahead of the June meeting.**

Identifying priorities for public promotion

Council Members have spent the last year working through the Thematic Needs Assessment document. Scott said they have worked their way through the process and covered important, meaningful ground and thanked everyone for their participation. He will spend some time over the summer compiling everything they have discussed into one document. This will become a framework for what the Council can accomplish. He said to look objectives they can on achieve on their own vs. items they need to find a partner (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, other county agencies, private business, etc.) to accomplish.

Moving forward, Scott encouraged the group to think about their promotional strategy. He suggested there are two key objectives; 1.) sharing the value and importance of Early Childhood Education with the public and 2.) a recruitment campaign to generate interest in increasing the number of providers.

He invited the group to think first about what is most important to share with the public. These should be high-level, specific talking points. He then opened the floor for thoughts from the other Council members.

Liz Cassidy asked if there had been a discussion at the April meeting about public investment in Child Care. She explained that there is a significant difference in the cost of care for families and what providers earn and feel this is an important message to convey to the public. Scott responded that the Council did talk about this issue and that we need to figure out details, and whether funds from the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority and private funders can be accepted. **Keisha is in the process of researching the answers to these questions and will provide more information to the group.**

Scott then asked the group how they would characterize a thriving child.

- Monica Jackson cited the presentation from Sallyann Bergh at the recently held Fairfax Futures symposium and said a thriving child is confident and ready to learn.
- Wynne Busman added that hearing from parents and providers about their positive experiences with children in care would be impactful.
- Liz mentioned that showing the public the larger picture of what happens when children receive quality care would be something to focus on. There is a direct line of early

education setting a child up for success in school which also impacts their communities in the future.

- Valerie Inman shared that she thinks it is important to show the positive side of investing in children's futures.

Keisha will share research and work that NCS does with its School Readiness program. They can look at various stages and narrow down the details.

Scott observed that while everyone on the CACC has a positive outlook about and highly values early childhood education, it is possible that not everyone shares this perspective. He asked Council Members to think about a few talking points that would help convince someone to change their mind.

- Monica's said she would be less inclined to share information and more likely to ask more personal questions to find out if they have children or grandchildren, for example. Her approach would be to make personal connections, rather than giving facts.
- Valerie would ask the person what kind of community they want to live in because safe, happy communities are created when you invest in children and their futures.

Looking at the recruitment side, Scott asked Council to think about how to make a case for becoming a provider. What are some strategies to use to motivate people to move into the early childhood education field?

- Wynne added that they should think about the benefits of being a provider. Some benefits she would like to highlight include: no commute (as a Family childcare provider), you can be your own boss, you can be at home with your own kids and build strong relationships with the children and families you care for. Also, it is important to highlight the tax benefits of being self-employed as many people are not aware of these.
- Mercedes Dash shared that she recently participated in a career information panel for high school students. She thinks that one of the benefits of being a provider is the constant education you receive on the job. Mercedes mentioned that explaining the career and educational path of becoming a provider would be good to highlight. As an example, she explained she started out by obtaining her CDA. Someone would then be able to obtain an associate's degree and move on to a bachelor's degree. The positive is that you can apply everything you learn while you are helping children.
- Mercedes also thinks it would be helpful if there were grant money available to help new providers get started as it is costly to start a new business.

Scott thanked the group for the beneficial insights. He will pull everything together and send drafts to share with the group. He welcomes any feedback.

Old and New Business

Monica Jackson asked if the Board of Supervisors (BOS) could issue a proclamation to recognize Childcare Provider Appreciation Day, which is observed this year on May 12th. NCS staff will work with BOS staff members to arrange this and will share the proclamation with the Council once it has been issued. (County procedures on having in-person proclamation ceremonies have changed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. If there is a shift back to in-person acknowledgements, NCS will also share this information with Council.)

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm. The motion was made by Wynne Busman and seconded by Elizabeth Cassidy.

Next Meeting

June 13, 2023

7:00 p.m.

Fairfax County Government Center

Conference Room 4/5