

CHILD CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

June 13, 2023

7:00 p.m.

Fairfax County Government Center Conference Room 4/5

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

Call to Order

Scott Stroh, Chair, called the June 13, 2023, Child Care Advisory Council meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Members and staff introduced themselves. Flor Philips, Shauna Skerman and Yonas Wondwossen from Early Childhood Programs and Services (ECPS) division were in attendance to present a programmatic update.

Review of Minutes

The May 9, 2023, meeting minutes were reviewed, and approved. Motion to approve without any changes was made by Valerie Inman, seconded by Gita D’Souza Kumar, and passed unanimously.

Old and New Business

Scott Stroh opened the floor for discussion of any old and new council business. He brought up the subject of council member’s terms as several people have asked him when their current terms end. The nominating committee will need to convene in the fall to select a new chair for the committee as his term will complete at the end of September. NCS staff presented the physical copy of the Early Childhood Educators Week proclamation to the council with the electronic version of the proclamation to follow via email. Scott mentioned that the council will adjourn its monthly meetings until September. Monica Jackson mentioned there is a grant funding opportunity, with the application opening on June 20th. However, she is concerned about the process of applying as it typically takes four months from submitting the application to receiving the funding. She asked if there was some administrative holdup causing the delay. Flor Philips explained that the submission period is open from June 20th to July 21st and there is a period of eligibility after the deadline. The funding is through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) so there are some Federal regulations on the funds that must be observed. However, this year there is less documentation required to make the application process easier hopefully.

Early Childhood Programs and Services presentation

ECPS staff introduced themselves and briefly explained their programs and roles. Keisha Dotson began the presentation by providing an overview of Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS) including the divisions she manages, Early Childhood Programs and Services, Fairfax Futures, and Inclusive Support Services. Keisha explained that a realignment of the former Office for Children and the name change has been underway for the past 18 months. The goal is to increase efficiency of the programs and there have been no changes to access or services.

Flor Philips, director of the Early Childhood Programs and Services division briefly provided an overview of the division's work and the programs the presentation was focused on, Childcare Assistance & Referral (CCAR) and Community Education and Provider Services (CEPS) and School Readiness (including the Ready Regions program). NCS leads the coordination of the Ready Region Capital Area (RRCA) which consists of Fairfax and Arlington Counties and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church. Flor explained that RRCA provides coordination and integration of Early Childhood Education services and resources and supports the ongoing strategies of building Virginia's Unified Early Childhood System.

Flor led a discussion of Early Childhood Supply and Access Gaps including slides of maps of the vulnerability index overlaid with the American Community Survey (ACS) data for the population of children under 5. Council members can access the interactive map [here](#). The map breaks down provider locations, the population of children under 5 in Fairfax County and where child care provider supply and access gaps exist.

Yonas Wondwossen, program manager of the Child Care Assistance & Referral (CCAR) program presented next. CCAR provides financial assistance for child care to families in Fairfax County and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church with low to moderate incomes and supports families in finding child care. CCAR staff also engage in various local events to ensure awareness about subsidy for both families and child care providers.

Yonas gave an overview of the program's data and explained that there has been an increase in the number of children served for FY23. As of April, there have been 5,602 children served by CCAR compared to 5,030 in FY22. There are currently 590 family home child care providers approved to provide subsidies and 230 center based providers approved to provide subsidies.

Elizabeth Cassidy asked Yonas if CCAR has data on the number of subsidy slots that are filled and if there is a waitlist. Yonas said there is not a waitlist currently, and he can provide the numbers of subsidy slots currently available but noted that the number is not static and changes every day.

Elizabeth asked what happens to the children that are not being served by subsidy. Flor explained that they are looking at their services from a family's perspective to see what they are missing. They want to get the family's input as to why a child may not be in care. Monica noted that a family's immigration status and income qualifications were barriers to accessing

care in the past. Flor and staff are working on getting the message out that job status does not matter, and they are only looking at the citizenship status of the child, not the family. She emphasized that will access to care is often impacted by governmental policies but the goal of CCAR (and ECPS) is to serve as many children as they can.

Shauna Skerman, manager of Community Education and Provider Services (CEPS) gave an overview and provided program data. CEPS provides information, assistance and support to individuals interested in becoming Fairfax County-permitted Family Child Care providers. CEPS also administers the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program which gives reimbursement to providers for healthy meals and snacks served to children in their care. CEPS also gives professional development support, leads recruitment efforts of child care providers, and supports the work of Ready Regions and the Virginia Quality Birth to Five System (VQB5).

As of May 2023, there are 558 center-based child care programs in Fairfax County, which is an increase of two compared to May 2022. There are currently 719 county permitted providers compared to 726 in FY22. There are currently 60 infant/toddler providers in Fairfax County.

Recruitment and retention are a large part of CEPS' work. CEPS staff engage in various local events and meetings, sharing information on the process of becoming a permitted family child care provider. They also host 18 virtual and in-person workshops to assist those interested in obtaining a county permit. Shauna pointed out there are differences in the number of people who attend the workshops vs. the number of people who obtained permits. As of June 8, 2023, there have been 111 initial applications received and 75 initial permits issued. Thus far in FY23, 144 providers have been inactive. They are looking at the barriers (for example, the cost of obtaining permit and/or the cost of CPR & 1st Aid certifications) that prevent people from moving forward in the permitting process and are working to increase the numbers of those who attend workshops vs. those who obtain their permits.

There have been over 2,800 participants in a CEPS professional development class thus far this fiscal year. This year they are providing more series courses (2 or more sessions per class) to expand learning. Some of the topics include writing contracts and policies, business marketing and website development, nutrition, safety and supervision and emergency preparedness.

Janet Reimer asked if there are one on one resources for class participants. Shauna explained that those opportunities exist through the Women's Business Center.

Monica Jackson asked Shauna about the differences between county permits and state licensing. Shauna said there are some small differences in the requirements but for the most part, the process is similar. Monica suggested that making the transition from being a county permitted provider to a state licensed provider smoother would be a great benefit for all.

Questions & Answers

There was a brief question and answer session at the end of the staff presentation. Janet asked if there are ways the council can assist ECPS in promoting the program and services they

provide. Keisha responded that NCS is open to partnering with the council to get the message out and identifying the areas where they have trouble reaching people.

Monica mentioned her experience of changing her business hours and the process she had to go through was very difficult and burdensome. She would like to see some improvements made for providers to make it easier to make changes to their businesses. Shauna said it was important to find out what the needs of providers are, and they can focus their attention on what's most relevant.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 pm. The motion was made by Janet Reimer and seconded by Wynne Busman.

Next Meeting

September 12, 2023

7:00 p.m.

Fairfax County Government Center

Conference Room 4/5