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## Early Childhood Advisory Council Meeting Summary

Thursday, June 12, 2025

12:00 p.m.

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### Purpose, Roles and Responsibilities of Early Childhood Advisory Council

**Purpose:** *As part of the state child care workforce strategic plan, local workforce boards are required to establish a child care advisory council. These advisory councils afford an opportunity for input on strategies to improve, sustain and support the quality of care and the child care workforce from a wide array of entities and individuals engaged and interested in early childhood.*

#### **Council Roles and Responsibilities**

- *Boards must provide program data to inform the Council's work, including information on the CCS program and quality improvement activities. Information provided regularly to the Council will include, but not be limited to:*
  - *Local waitlist and enrollment numbers*
  - *Changes in state and local CCS policies/rules/requirements that will impact early childhood providers*
  - *Status of local quality initiatives*
- *The Council will also provide input for development of the local annual child care quality plan and feedback on CCS policy change recommendations.*
- *The Council may also serve as an information source on other early childhood topics identified by the Board.*

### Meeting Summary

**Attendees:** Carrie Pierce, Cynthia Pearson, Jennifer Gonzalez, Katrese Scott, Noreen White.

**Visitors:** Andrea De La Garza and Tiffany Falconer – SERCO of Texas

**Staff:** Lisa Colyer, Director of Program Operations, and Mindy Ross, Early Childhood Manager

#### **Meeting Materials:**



Agenda  
6-12-2025.docx



Meeting Summary  
3-26-2025.docx



Preliminary-Recap-2  
025-Updated-June-'Texas' new child car



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## I. Call to Order

Carrie Pierce, Council Chair, called the meeting to order. Members reviewed meeting summary from previous meeting – no questions or comments. Cynthia Pearson noted that she is having difficulty accessing the Teams folder and is therefore unable to access current/past meeting information. Board staff will research.

## II. Child Care Data

Waitlist and Enrollment Numbers – as of June 11, 2025, there were 1905 Children in Care, and 1081 children on the waiting list. All children who are identified as having parents working for a regulated provider have been placed in care.

Changes in Policies/Rules/Requirements Impacting Early Childhood Providers – Lisa Colyer, Director of Program Operations for the Board, provided policy updates related to absence tracking in TX3C (now scheduled to launch July 2, 2025), and use of Texas Rising Star outreach collateral. The question was raised about how legislation recently passed related to service priority for child care workers would impact operations locally, and if center directors would now be able to be reimbursed for care for their own children at their center. Lisa explained there would be no local impact related to service priority for child care employees, since this population is already a service priority for West Central. The legislation does not affect center directors – they are still prohibited from being paid for care provided to their own child at their center.

Texas Rising Star Data – Currently, there are 10 providers at Entry Level designation, 35 providers are 2-Star certified, 25 providers are 3-Star certified and 8 providers are 4-Star certified. Council members requested that additional columns be added to the report that would indicate how many providers are on suspension, and how many have lost CCS certification.

The question was raised as to how information about new policies and procedures is disseminated. These updates can come from a variety of sources depending upon subject matter – from SERCO staff, Board staff, or TWC via govdelivery email. Since govdelivery is a subscription service and is more likely to land in junk mailboxes, Board staff typically forward those emails to providers to ensure the message is received.

FY25 Quality Initiatives Update – Mindy Ross, Early Childhood Manager for the Board, reviewed progress on the current year initiatives. Staff incentive payments have been completed, and incentive payments will be issued for new TRS providers. The Infant/Toddler Outdoor Equipment purchase is in progress. Mindy explained the methodology being used for FY25 to determine incentive recipients and equipment to be purchased. An email with details about this project should go out June 15.

## III. Council Member Input on FY26 Quality Initiatives that will Improve, Sustain and Support the Quality of Care and the Child Care Workforce

Ms. Ross reviewed the process by which the Board receives input in the development of the annual Quality Initiatives plan. Feedback is solicited from child care owners/directors, Texas Rising Star mentors, and the Early Childhood Advisory Council. Surveys to solicit feedback for the FY26 plan are scheduled for distribution in July; draft plan should be ready for review in August. In the meantime, local staff will attend the annual quality summit (hosted by TWC) to learn about best practices and any new requirements for FY26.

Council members were asked to provide input for the FY26 quality plan. Feedback included:

- Staff incentives – these are well received by staff. Providers would like to have input into the award process, which might include determining award elements, frequency of payments, and/or funds to allocate based on criteria specific to their center.

- Director’s Retreat that would stretch across a Friday evening – Saturday afternoon and include topics related to business and finance.
- Training of Trainer sessions for both directors and staff.
- Child Development Associate (CDA) classes – staff are encouraged to enroll, but providers are not seeing enthusiastic responses due to burnout and limited free time outside of work hours. Providers have not found online CDA classes to be particularly successful, either.
- No real need for preservice offerings – providers have created their own materials or purchased them from other sources.
- Director certification training would be nice, but many receive their non-expiring certification based on a combination of experience and training hours instead of attending a formal training that includes certification that must be renewed periodically.
- The return of a Caregiver Banquet was suggested, with providers purchasing tables for their staff, and recruiting sponsors for food.

#### **IV. Updates from the 89<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session**

Lisa Colyer and Ms. Cynthia Pearson, President and CEO of Day Nursery of Abilene, reviewed preliminary results of legislation passed during the 86<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session that affect child care (see meeting documents attached). Legislation that passed will not be considered finalized until the governor signs them over the next few weeks. Cynthia shared that Texans Care for Children is holding a Zoom meeting on July 10<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am (after the signing deadline) to share final information about legislation signed into law, and the impact for the early childhood community. Registration information can be found on the Texans Care for Children website. Cynthia also mentioned an article in the Dallas Morning News on this same topic, and sent a link to the article at the conclusion of the meeting for reference (see meeting documents attached).

#### **V. Council Member Input – What Would You Like to Know More About in Future Meetings?**

At the next meeting, Lisa will begin spotlighting components of the Child Care Services (CCS) system and answering questions that Council members might have on the chosen subject. Members were asked to submit to Lisa any questions they may have about the CCS system that they would like to see addressed in future meetings.

#### **VI. Other Business**

- a. Grant Awards – Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas has received a two-year grant from the Children’s Learning Institute (CLI) to serve as a Texas School Ready (TSR) Comprehensive Lead Agent. In this role, the Board will serve as the hub for TSR Comprehensive services in our community, providing direct service delivery to partnered programs, in addition to those services already being provided through the Texas Rising Star program. The goal is to help children be ready for school and ready for life by empowering teachers with skills that positively impact the children’s classroom learning environment and educational experience.
- b. TX3C – Council Member Input re: how can local staff best serve families and providers during this transition period? Board staff solicited feedback from Council members as to how providers and families can best be served during the TWIST/TX3C transition. Comments/suggestions include:
  - Increased communication between the Board/Contractor and providers.
  - Increased availability of staff to answer calls and address questions in real time.
  - Provider training on the use of the Provider Portal, and especially how to read payment detail information. Lisa shared that TWC plans to require CCS staff to function in this capacity, and

additional information will be shared as it is made available. In the meantime, Mindy will send out a desk aide that will assist providers in reading their payment detail information.

- Giving providers a single point of contact for questions/concerns. Lisa explained that this is the role of the Provider Services staff, a position that is currently vacant. CCS staff are creating a triage unit comprised of a staff person from each functional unit to address problems/concerns related to their area of expertise. There will be an email address created specifically for TX3C-related issues/concerns. Providers can expect an immediate acknowledgement of receipt, and direct contact with a member of the triage team within 24 hours.
- Protocols being consistently followed as it relates to returning calls, issuing Notices of Action, etc.
- Create a local task force to look into issues and assist in getting those issues resolved.

In addition to these suggestions, the following concerns were identified:

- Multiple adjustments to paid claims (which can be expected in a system that now pays prospectively), but oftentimes for the same child/time period;
- Preemptively launching a system that was not fully piloted, resulting in issues not being identified/resolved in advance of full system launch;
- Payment information in the provider portal not matching payment issued (Mindy noted that this issue has been fixed, and to please contact her if this problem persists);
- Lack of staff training on the new system, resulting in delays and inconsistencies;
- Staff time being spent on tracking things such as payment irregularities, receipt of paperwork, etc.;
- Ability of providers to discern what are local issues that can be resolved by contractor staff versus systemic issues that are TWC's responsibility to resolve.
- Inability for TX3C to have two-way information exchanges with other case management systems being utilized by providers.

- c. Member Information Sharing – Noreen White reminded members about the infant/toddler training opportunities available through the Betty Hardwick Center.

**VII. Next meeting – September 11, 2025 at noon. Attendance options – in person at the Board offices or virtual attendance.**

**VIII. Adjourn**