

# State of New Mexico

## CHILDREN, YOUTH and FAMILIES DEPARTMENT

**SUSANA MARTINEZ**  
GOVERNOR

**JOHN SANCHEZ**  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



**YOLANDA BERUMEN-DEINES**  
CABINET SECRETARY

**JENNIFER PADGETT**  
DEPUTY CABINET SECRETARY

### **NEW MEXICO EARLY LEARNING ADVISORY COUNCIL (ELAC)**

MEETING MINUTES

June 5, 2014

CNM Workforce Development Center – Albuquerque NM

The newly elected chair, Erica Stubbs, said the council at a recent planning meeting talked about "having town meetings around the state so we were encouraging people to come and see us without having to come to Albuquerque."

The council also talked about specifically inviting collaboration from other groups working in early childhood and heard reports on Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD) PreK contracts for the coming year, on the progress of federal Race to the Top Early Learning Grant projects, on the progress -- lack of progress -- in the spread of inclusion practices in programs throughout the state, and on home visiting services. ELAC also recommended adding a parent with a child currently or recently receiving early childhood services to be appointed to a vacancy in an at-large seat on ELAC.

#### **ELAC INVITES COLLABORATION**

ELAC soon will contract with a website developer to create an ELAC website in order to communicate about its work with the public. Erica asked ELAC member Franz Joachim to chair a committee to work on an ELAC logo design and work on the web site. ELAC in a closed session Apr. 25 had decided to ask high school students to submit logo designs and submit the designs through their school districts.

Erica also talked about town halls as a way to get more public input and said ELAC is thinking of holding about five of them, each hosted by an organization or committee in the community where the town hall will be held. ELAC has committees working on access to quality, school readiness and workforce development. Erica wants the committees to work collaboratively with other groups working in those areas. "Our intention is not to reinvent the wheel," she said. Groups -- such as the Early Childhood Higher Education Task Force -- can be subcommittees of ELAC or they can just be invited to collaborate in ELAC's work.

For instance, ELAC decided to have its executive committee -- Erica, Barbara Tedrow and Heather Vaughn -- to talk with Steve Hendrix, CYFD's early childhood services director, about meeting with the Children's Cabinet on

how ELAC and the Children's Cabinet can collaborate. ELAC member Andy Gomm brought up that it appeared the Children's Cabinet is becoming more active.

Barbara Tedrow, co-chair of the public policy committee of ELAC along with Larry Langley, encouraged anyone with interest in particular policy or legislative issues to contact her and she can bring the matters to ELAC's attention.

The next meeting of ELAC is Sept. 4, and the group decided to invite members of the J. Paul Taylor Early Childhood Task Force, which is working on ways to end child abuse and improve agency collaborations, to attend that meeting. Also invited will be members of the NM Child Care Task Force, which is meeting to develop a Child Care Accountability Act for the next legislative session. It was noted that several ELAC members are participating in the child care group. Barbara is to contact the child care group. The executive committee of ELAC plans to meet with child care task force leaders BEFORE September also to get information about what is being worked on.

Also at the September meeting, ELAC said it wants to have a representative of consultant Child Trends talk about its work on the FOCUS Tiered Quality Improvement Rating System for early childhood services and have a representative of consultant WestEd, which is going to work on a new kindergarten readiness assessment based on New Mexico's Early Learning Guidelines -- and on validating the child assessment tool NM uses so that Head Start partners can use the tool and be in compliance with federal regulations, said Alejandra Rebolledo-Rea.

## **RACE TO THE TOP PROJECTS MOVING AHEAD**

Dan Haggard, who represents CYFD Secretary Yolanda Deines on ELAC, presented the FOCUS quality criteria that have been developed to evaluate child care and education centers using Race to the Top funds. He went through the criteria page by page noting that there were two main areas -- elements that are needed to establish a quality program and elements that involve intentional teaching and quality practices. These criteria will be adapted for home visiting, public school preschools and developmentally delayed classrooms, early intervention programs and Head Starts.

"We are the only state including home visiting in our system of systems quality rating improvement system," Dan noted. What New Mexico is doing is being watched closely across the nation.

A new emphasis will be placed on intentional leadership, Dan said, working with UNM's Family Development Program, to offer leadership institutes for early childhood program directors. These institutes will not be zeroing in on the mechanics of how to be a director but on how a director can create a community of learners and excitement for learning in the program.

The work on FOCUS has raised new issues around how child care and education is funded. The state has relied in the past on tiered child care subsidy levels to provide money for quality.

"We have to find alternative strategies for financing high quality," Dan said. For instance, he said, teachers can't work with children eight hours a day and have time to reflect, document observations and plan lessons. So the state is going to pay for planning time separately from child care subsidy. The grants will be issued for programs that are rated 3-STAR in quality or higher to pay for floaters to relieve teachers from their regular duties for two hours a week. That is the first example of an alternative financing structure, he said.

At 5-STAR -- the highest quality rating -- under FOCUS, the state is expecting a 1 to 3 staff ratio for infants. Currently, the state allows up to six infants per teachers at lower quality levels. The state is thinking about alternative ways of helping to finance that ratio. For instance, if a program has only one or two infants

on state subsidy, even large increases in subsidy rates, won't provide enough additional funds to support the lower ratios.

Also, the state must realize that if it boosts its rates too much, it will make it very hard for parents who pay for services because the new state subsidy rates may drive up all charges for early care and education.

"We want to build increased access and not create situations where we are driving parents out of the market, or providers underground," Dan said.

The FOCUS criteria for quality are being piloted in 150 programs right now, and CYFD is getting ready to add another cohort or programs, he said. Last Monday, the state had a conference on FOCUS with 300 people from programs around the state.

Andy Gomm asked what incentives were provided for programs to participate.

The principal incentive is higher child care subsidy, Dan said. Proposed new child care regulations, for which there is a hearing June 19, will increase base subsidy rates and boost added differentials rates programs are paid if they meet FOCUS criteria at higher star levels of quality. The increase in base rate for infants in licensed programs will be about a third, Dan said.

ELAC member Rebecca Dow said increases in subsidy rates were needed just to bring payments closer to the mandated 75% of market rates. But the increases are being coupled with lower staff ratios and other requirements -- which are good, she said, but which may be difficult for programs to meet. For one thing, programs have only so much square footage, and it may be hard to serve the same number of infants if ratios are changed to such a great extent.

She noted that only four states have a 1 to 3 ratio for teachers working with infants, and those states pay rates much higher than NM. Has New Mexico looked at the cost of the new ratios?

Dan said that the state used cost modeling developed for New Mexico by consultant Kelly O'Donnell based on work done nationally by Louise Stoney and Anne Mitchell.

ELAC member Ray Jaramillo noted that his center, though accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, has never met the group size requirements. Will there be variations or exceptions allowed under FOCUS? Dan said there probably would be, and that New Mexico will look at what other states are doing.

Accreditation by a national group can be used to establish a 5-STAR quality rating still under FOCUS, as long as the accrediting body has been shown to be substantially in accord with NAEYC standards, Dan said. He said what the bodies need to do is to show that substantial compliance, and that information about what is required has been sent to accrediting bodies, such as NECPA.

Public school preschool programs, including NM PreK, are looking now at how the FOCUS standards will apply to them.

Dan Ritchey, director of the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarship program, reported that in all there are now 646 educators across the state using T.E.A.C.H. scholarships to get early education degrees. About 70% of the participants are working on Associate Degrees. Under Race to the Top, a new heavily early childhood Doctoral Program was established by New Mexico State University beginning this summer, and T.E.A.C.H. is supporting 15 students to participate. A cohort of nine educators from a variety of programs around the state are participating in an on-line Master's program through the Erikson Institute in Chicago, Ill. These cohorts are part of building up the infrastructure in colleges and universities -- and among consultant programs -- to train and mentor teachers. Sponsoring a second cohort at Erikson is being considered, Dan Haggard said.

The 646 educators is getting close to the limit of what current T.E.A.C.H. funding can accommodate, so by later this year T.E.A.C.H. may need to look at either prioritizing who receives new scholarships or reducing the number of classes paid for, Dan Ritchey said, unless additional funding can be found.

### **CYFD PREK CONTRACTS, FUNDING INCREASED**

CYFD is doing final contract negotiation for new contractors to do CYFD PreK services and for established contractors to pilot extended-day PreK, said Alejandra Rebolledo-Rea, bureau chief of the Office of Child Development.

She said CYFD had \$1.65 million in money from the legislature to expand basic NM PreK services. There were 26 applicants, and CYFD has chosen 16 programs to be added at a cost of \$1.39 million. Some applicants did not qualify because of not completing to all the application required, not meeting deadlines or for being under licensing sanctions. The money not used was added to the extended-day NM PreK, she said.

Initially, CYFD had \$1.98 million from the legislature to pilot extended day PreK -- 900 hours per funding year per child, instead of the usual 450 hours -- and CYFD chose 32 programs to try out the extended day for which a program receives \$6,000 per child for the year instead of the usual \$3,000.

CYFD was able also to find nearly another \$3 million from early childhood services funds that it could use for extended-day PreK, and so 34 MORE programs were funded for extended-day pilots, she said.

In their initial applications, programs had requested a total of \$12.23 million, Alejandra said. In many cases, CYFD had to negotiate how many children could actually be served in each program.

### **CONCERN ABOUT LACK OF INCLUSIVE PRACTICES**

Lisa McNiven of the Governor's Commission on Disability presented a report to ELAC showing that state perceptions of inclusive practices in most areas show a decline from 2009 to 2014.

For instance, she said, there has been a decrease in early childhood programs recruiting, enrolling and welcoming infants, toddlers and preschoolers with disabilities and their families over that time, she said. "We need a more educated workforce to support all children in early childhood programs, but especially children with a disability, she said.

Lisa said there has been a significant decrease in the area of parents as partners and leaders since 2008 in part because of a shortage of funding. Ways must be found to involve parents as active partners, Lisa said.

There has been a decline in cross-agency networking to plan and coordinate early childhood services, she said.

The state leadership team of Special Quest for Inclusion -- a subcommittee of ELAC's Access to Quality Committee -- recommended that ELAC:

--Consider adding a family voice on ELAC.

--Explore funding to support successful programs such as Family as Faculty -- which Parents Reaching Out (PRO) is using to bring together parents of children with disabilities with future early educators and health care professionals to provide opportunities for the professionals to learn from the families. "We have families trained to share their stories ... and help future professionals understand what it is like to have a child with disabilities," said Erica Candelaria, with PRO.

--Work with the governor's office to develop incentives to keep a qualified workforce in New Mexico, especially in the rural areas.

ELAC member Karen Ziegler, who is on the Access to Quality Committee of ELAC, noted that some college programs that train health and education professionals attract people from out of state who then return to their home states. Karen said local people should be given priority to get into college programs so they will stay in New Mexico.

Andy Gomm suggested asking the legislature to add three parent members to ELAC. It was noted that guardians and other caregivers ought to be included as well. Dan Haggard said the ELAC legislation will sunset in a year or two so he opposed asking the legislature to amend the legislation now.

There is a vacancy in an at-large position on ELAC, and it was moved by Andy that ELAC recommend to the secretary of CYFD and the governor that a parent of a child currently receiving early childhood services or having received services in the past three years be appointed to the at-large position. Ray Jaramillo seconded the motion, which passed.

Dan Haggard had said the voice he misses is that of a parent of a child with special needs in particular, but ELAC decided to just ask for appointment of a parent or guardian of a child receiving services because they did not want to disqualify a parent very active in a group like Parents Reaching Out, for instance, who might be well connected with many parents.

## **HOME VISITING ANNUAL REPORT**

Dan Haggard also presented the first Home Visiting Annual Report showing how the home visiting programs that contract with CYFD are meeting their responsibilities. CYFD is fine-tuning the measures used to show that the different goals of home visiting are met. The report, developed to be responsive to the Home Visiting Accountability Act, shifts the focus at CYFD from contract compliance by contractors to actually looking at outcomes for families and children.

CYFD is also going to be adjusting measures to show the effectiveness of a new effort in home visiting -- that directed at family child care home providers.

Andy Gomm noted that New Mexico is blessed in having a lot of philanthropic effort being put into home visiting -- by the LANL Foundation, First Born, St. Joseph Community Health. He noted that data on those programs efforts are not included in the report.

The data system being developed by the state is very "robust," Dan said, and the philanthropic groups are exploring contracting with the same data system. Dan noted that public schools also do home visiting services, and those also are not included in the CYFD report.

## **ELAC ATTENDANCE, BYLAWS**

Alejandra noted that some ELAC members have completed two-year terms and may not be continuing. Once their letters of resignation are received, the governor can consider replacements. Some members must represent a particular area of early childhood, such as early childhood higher education. Anyone can apply to be on ELAC at the governor's website under "boards and commissions."

As part of a review of bylaws, it was suggested that wording about public input sessions be available at each ELAC meeting be put in the bylaws. Alejandra will send out proposed bylaws changes for ELAC members to respond to before the next meeting, when they can be approved.

Karen Ziegler suggested that the bylaws might be changed to require that if a member misses two meetings in a year -- whether excused or not -- that ELAC would be required to make a recommendation to the governor about whether the person continue on ELAC. Karen said her concern is that if ELAC meets four times a year, missing two meetings is missing half.

It was recommended that the chair may excuse absences if the reasons are determined valid by the executive committee. Two unexcused absences would require a recommendation to the governor about whether a member can continue on ELAC. Karen said the proposed change satisfied her concern.

Andy Gomm said state agencies in particular should always be represented at ELAC meetings, so it was decided that Erica and Alejandra would draft a letter to state agencies -- CYFD and the Public Education Department in particular -- to always have a designee present representing each department's secretary. It was suggested that each secretary could have a couple of designees, so that if one cannot attend a meeting, the other could.