



Early Childhood Policy Council

Meeting Agenda, Attendance, and Summary Report

Wednesday, May 27, 2026

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Physical Meeting:
1000 G Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
WestEd, 5th floor, Capitol Room

Agenda

Welcome and Introduction

- Welcome
- New Council member introductions
- Review of agenda

Council May Revise Letter Discussion

- Subcommittee shares draft letter
- Council discussion
- Possible Council endorsement

Family Access and Federal Policy Subcommittee Discussion

- Subcommittee shares draft content
- Council discussion

Workforce Needs Subcommittee Discussion

- Subcommittee shares draft content
- Council discussion

General Public Comment

Attendance:

Council Members: Andrea Fernandez Mendoza, Catherine Brozowski, Claire Ramsey, Diana Ramos, Donna Sneeringer, Karla Pleitéz-Howell, Gabriela Gonzalez, Maéva Renaud, Mary Ann Hansen, Mary Ignatius, Matilda Soria, Miren Algorri, Natali Gaxiola, Ranae Amezquita, Ristyn Woolley, Shanna Birkholz-Vasquez, Stephen Prophet, Sonia Jaramillo, Tony Jordan, Tonia McMillian.

Summary Report:

Welcome and Introduction:

Karin Bloomer, meeting facilitator for the Early Childhood Policy Council (ECPC), opened the second meeting of 2026.

Claire Ramsey, Council Chair and Chief Deputy Director of the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), welcomed members to the Council's second meeting of 2026. She acknowledged the busy budget season and noted the May Revise is underway. Rather than conduct a full roll call, Ramsey introduced the Council's newly appointed members and invited each to share a brief introduction.

Full welcoming remarks and introductions are recorded on pages 2-8 of the [ECPC May 27 meeting transcript](#).

New Council Member Introductions

Ranae Amezquita is Executive Director for Early Childhood Education at the Los Angeles Unified School District. Her work includes building bridges between the district's early childhood programs, transitional kindergarten (TK) programs, and other departments.

Catherine Brozowski is Executive Director of the Audacious Foundation, a Santa Barbara-based charitable foundation focused on whole-child education, quality early childhood education, and outdoor classrooms and play. She brings a background in public administration and political science and a perspective as a parent.

Gabriela Gonzalez is a second-grade teacher with the Montebello Unified School District and a member of the California State Board of Education. Her work centers on multilingual learners, family engagement, and equitable access. She is excited to bring her classroom and policy perspectives to the Council.

Tony Jordan is Executive Director of the Child and Family Services Division at the Stanislaus County Office of Education. His programs serve an eight-county region and, in the past program year, impacted more than 10,000 children and their families.

Becky Beland McNaught is Head of Communications at the Sacramento Kings. She previously was Chief of Staff to Jennifer Siebel Newsom for the first three years of Governor Gavin Newsom's administration. In that role, she helped develop early childhood well-being programs. She currently serves on the board of the California Partners Project.

Maéva Renaud is Vice President of Advocacy & Policy with Kidango, a Bay Area early childhood nonprofit that serves about 6,000 families through general child care and state preschool and supports roughly 70 child care providers through a family child care home education network. Her work is focused on grassroots organizing to center the voices of early childhood education (ECE) professionals and families.

Matilda Soria is Executive Director of the Child and Family Success Division at the Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools (FCSS). In this role, she oversees early care and education, the Foster and Homeless Youth Education Services Department, the Cradle to Career initiative, health services, and government relations.

During the new council members introduction segment, **Ramsey** also announced that two newly appointed members, Wendy Sims-Moten and Liz Simons, would join the Council at the August meeting. In addition, she thanked outgoing members Robin Layton and Kay Ruhstaller for their sustained dedication and expertise throughout their 6-year terms.

Ramsey shared that the Council still has two vacancies, while the Parent Advisory Committee has three open slots. She noted that the ECPC webpage includes information on how to apply for an appointment to the ECPC with links for each of the possible application pathways. She also shared that the 2025 ECPC Annual Report had been posted to the website and can be found under the Resources tab.

Council May Revise Letter Discussion:

Presentation by the subcommittee

Ramsey explained that the Council submits budget recommendations to legislative leaders and the Governor's Office both before budget hearings and again at the May Revise. Ramsey thanked Council member Andrea Fernandez Mendoza for drafting the May Revise letter and outlined the process for the Council's review: a brief overview, clarifying questions, real-time edits focused on concepts, and a closing roll-call vote. Ramsey reminded members associated with the administration or constitutional offices to abstain from the vote.

Fernandez Mendoza presented the draft letter, noting it closely mirrored the January budget letter because the underlying issues remain largely the same. She explained that while the state had largely sustained existing funding, programs were effectively facing cuts due to inflation. Fernandez Mendoza highlighted a key correction: the

January letter referenced promised funding for an additional 44,000 slots, but these slots are the remaining slots promised under Governor Newsom rather than an additional allotment. She also noted that the letter continued to emphasize protecting healthcare access and the safety and well-being of immigrant children and families amid changes related to HR 1.

Council discussion

Fernandez Mendoza and facilitator **Karin Bloomer** opened the floor for Council discussion on the letter, incorporating proposed edits in real time. The full text of Council discussion on the draft May Revise letter is on pages 10-23 of the [ECPC May 27 transcript](#). The following recommendations and edits emerged from the discussion:

- Clarifying the state's commitment to fund child care slots: **Donna Sneeringer** and **Mary Ignatius** asked that the letter specify that the promised 44,000 slots for fiscal year 2026–27 (and 33,000 slots for fiscal year 2027–28) were agreed upon in statute. They also asked that the letter urge that funding for existing contracted slots and vouchers be maintained.
- Naming continuing federal impacts up front: **Karla Pleitéz Howell** proposed adding language early in the letter to note that the May Revise still does not address ongoing HR 1 threats to immigrant families.
- Addressing the adjustment-factor disparity: **Tony Jordan** raised the issue of the disparity in adjustment factors between California State Preschool Programs (CSPPs) and other center-based contracts. He suggested asking for this disparity to be addressed. **Stephen Prophet** recommended specifying the request as equitably raising the adjustment factor for all non–state preschool programs to avoid unintended reductions.
- Elevating workforce concerns: **Jordan** expressed concern about the impact proposed changes to the Child Development Permit matrix could have on the already strained workforce. **Matilda Soria** proposed adding a request for investment in entry-level professional development.
- Responding to May Revise proposals: **Tonia McMillian** requested including a call for prospective pay; disaster relief reaching all providers affected by the wildfires, including family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) caregivers; and a cost-of-living adjustment equal to other educators (specified at 4.31 percent), grouped as May Revise–specific items.
- Including family child care in the mixed delivery system: **McMillian** and **Maéva Renaud** emphasized that family child care educators must be explicitly named as part of the mixed delivery system. **Renaud** also urged (1) maintaining \$35 million for county offices of education to sustain UPK coordination with community-based organizations and family child care homes and (2) adopting the Senate

proposal to move non-Local Educational Agency (LEA) CSPPs under Proposition 98.

- Organizing the letter by theme and preserving impact: **Renaud** suggested grouping priorities under access, workforce, and safety net. Members agreed to reorganize the letter accordingly, keeping child care slots as the first item, and maintaining a concise, readable letter.

Council endorsement of May Revise letter

Karin Bloomer conducted a roll-call vote. Council members associated with the Newsom administration and constitutional offices abstained. Votes were recorded as follows:

- Aye (16): **Karla Pleitéz Howell; Catherine Brozowski; Mary Ann Hansen; Sonia Jaramillo; Donna Sneeringer; Natali Gaxiola; Andrea Fernandez Mendoza; Tonia McMillian; Miren Algorri; Mary Ignatius; Tony Jordan; Gabriela Gonzalez; Maéva Renaud; Matilda Soria; Ranae Amezquita; Becky Beland McNaught**
- Abstain (5): **Claire Ramsey; Ristyn Woolley; Stephen Propheter; Diana Ramos; Shanna Birkholz-Vasquez**
- No (0): None
- Absent (4): **Wendy Sims-Moten; Socorro Martin; Lissete Frausto; Liz Simons**

Following the vote, the Council accepted a final amendment adding language to the wildfire-recovery section to ensure a fair and racially equitable recovery. With no members changing their vote, the letter was approved to be finalized based on the agreed edits, submitted to legislative leaders and the Governor's Office, and ultimately posted to the ECPC webpage.

Family Access and Federal Policy Subcommittee Discussion:

Subcommittee shared draft content

Claire Ramsey reminded members about Assembly Bill 563 provisions, which invites the Council to develop proposals on workforce needs, family access, and facility needs. She walked through the new process the Council is piloting for developing recommendations in these focus areas and explained that the Council had agreed to build recommendations from its existing budget-letter priorities rather than start from scratch. Two-member subcommittees—working in coordination with the Parent Advisory and Workforce Advisory Committees, chaired by **Mary Ignatius** and **Tonia McMillian** respectively—would draft content for a final annual report to be voted on at the November meeting.

Ramsey introduced the Family Access and Federal Policy Subcommittee, formed by **Karla Pleitéz Howell** and **Sonia Jaramillo**.

Pleitéz Howell explained that subcommittee's work is grounded in three values: (1) respecting and building on the work already led by families, advocates, providers, and researchers rather than reinventing it; (2) responding to the instability families face amid federal policy shifts, safety-net threats, housing insecurity, and immigration concerns; and (3) drawing on the Council's collective expertise and lived experience. She also clarified that rather than sharing draft content, the subcommittee was presenting a proposed process for developing its recommendations and key questions, seeking input from the Council on both.

Jaramillo reviewed AB 563's requirement for an annual report identifying successes, challenges, and gaps, and outlined the subcommittee's five priority areas drawn from the budget letter: (1) funding the promised child care spaces without losing ground; (2) protecting healthcare access and eligibility flexibility; (3) protecting housing security through grant funding; (4) protecting the safety and well-being of immigrant families and children, including access to legal services; and (5) strengthening safety-net policies to reduce poverty and promote economic stability in response to HR 1 cuts.

Pleitéz Howell outlined the proposed process for developing recommendations: (1) gathering critical input from the Council, (2) coordinating with the Parent Advisory and Workforce Advisory Committees, (3) reviewing meeting chats and written comments, (4) reviewing prior annual reports and field literature, and (5) returning in August with refined recommendations ahead of a final endorsement on November 19. She encouraged Council members to join the August 27 meeting in person and posed three questions regarding key gaps and risks, historical sources to consult, and in-person attendance.

Council discussion

Pleitéz Howell opened the floor for input. The full text of Council discussion on the family access recommendations is on pages 33-39 of the [ECPC May 27 transcript](#). The following themes emerged from the discussion:

- System coordination across silos: **Donna Sneeringer** urged centering cross-system coordination across recommendations, noting that families must navigate healthcare, housing, and safety-net systems holistically. She pointed to emerging closed-loop referral practices (for example, in Riverside County) as a model for what can be done at the state level.
- Targeted and underserved populations: **Tonia McMillian** asked whether the existing structure for recommendations explicitly includes children with special needs and formerly incarcerated mothers and their child care. **Pleitéz Howell** confirmed that these groups are not explicitly included and acknowledged the need to reserve space for critical issues beyond the five priorities.

- Continuity for children with disabilities: **Andrea Fernandez Mendoza** noted disconnects between regional center and school district services. She also highlighted that lack of clarity around Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) supports can impact child care enrollments and leave families without the services they need. She urged clearer communication so families understand their rights and care options.
- Parents' fears and a lack of provider awareness of AB 495, the Family Preparedness Plan Act: **Fernandez Mendoza** highlighted families' fear that subsidized-program information could be shared with immigration or law enforcement. She also noted that providers have confusion about what is required under AB 495. She suggested clearer, more accessible guidance for center-based and family child care home providers.
- Unaddressed budget items: **Tony Jordan** suggested that the recommendations center any priorities from the May Revise letter that are not enacted in the 2026–27 budget. He also recommended using the funding model of Proposition 98 to determine equitable baseline funding for child care, taking into account the longer hours and days many ECE programs operate.
- Existing recommendations: To avoid duplicate work, **Mary Ignatius** offered to share a crosswalk of prior recommendations, developed by **Julia Frudden** of the Child Care Law Center and **Laura Pryor** of the California Budget and Policy Center.

Workforce Needs Subcommittee Discussion:

Subcommittee shares draft content

Claire Ramsey introduced the Workforce Needs Subcommittee, led by **Natali Gaxiola** and **Andrea Fernandez Mendoza** who presented draft recommendations on the Flex Factor and contract earning floor, as well as rate reform.

Fernandez Mendoza and **Gaxiola** explained that, historically, child care program owners were paid based on attendance, with a 5 percent Flex Factor allowing centers that met 95 percent of their attendance-based earnings to receive their full contract amount. COVID-era Hold Harmless protections, which paid full contracts regardless of attendance, end June 30, 2026. Beginning July 1, the state will reimburse child care centers based on enrollment rather than attendance—an improvement, but without an accompanying Flex Factor.

Competition from transitional kindergarten, declining birth rates, staffing shortages, immigration-related fear and other challenges are impacting child care enrollment. Therefore, the subcommittee is recommending that the Legislature and Governor enact a 15 percent Flex Factor. This would allow child care centers that maintain at least 85 percent of certified enrollment to be reimbursed at their full contract amount. Fernandez

Mendoza and Gaxiola emphasized that the change could be established through regulation at no additional budget cost, since the funds are already allocated in contracts.

Council discussion

The full text of Council discussion on the Flex Factor recommendation is on pages 42-46 of the [ECPC May 27 transcript](#). The following themes emerged from the discussion:

- Applicability of Flex Factor: **Tonia McMillian** urged that the recommendation state clearly that the Flex Factor applies to subsidized, contracted (Title V) centers rather than all providers, to avoid misinformation. This need for clarity was echoed by providers in attendance during public comment. **Fernandez Mendoza** agreed and confirmed that family child care home education networks are reimbursed differently and would not be penalized.
- Interaction with existing reimbursement rules: **Tony Jordan** sought clarity on how the 85 percent earning floor would interact with the pre-COVID structure of the lesser of earnings, expenses, or maximum reimbursable amount. He asked for language supportive of family child care home providers operating within center-based contracts.
- Alignment with a single rate structure: **Karla Pleitéz Howell** asked that the recommendation explain how the interim Flex Factor would align with California's move to a single rate structure. **Fernandez Mendoza** framed it as a temporary, cost-neutral bridge until rate reform is fully implemented.

Subcommittee shares draft content (continued)

Gaxiola and **Fernandez Mendoza** presented the second recommendation: advancing rate reform funding to meet the true cost of care. They summarized California's transition to a cost-based alternative methodology under a 2021 law that created a joint labor-management committee (JLMC); the CDSS cost-estimation model developed with Prenatal to Five Fiscal Strategies across all 58 counties; and the JLMC's December 2025 recommendations that the model should inform but not cap rate setting. They noted that full implementation of the single rate structure is expected to take an additional 2 years at least. The subcommittee's recommendation included three parts: 1) requiring CDSS to submit a transition timeline by January 31, 2027 and update it annually; 2) ensuring consistent and equitable application across the mixed delivery system—applying a uniform cost-based methodology, accounting for regional market rate inequities, reflecting geographic variation, regularly updating the model, and making interim rate increases available; and 3) requiring transparent, reproducible, and honest data in all rate-setting decisions.

Council discussion (continued)

The full text of Council discussion on the rate reform recommendation is on pages 48-52 of the [ECPC May 27 transcript](#). The following themes emerged from the discussion:

- Define the uniform methodology in detail: **Catherine Brozowski** and **Tony Jordan** asked for more detail on applying the same cost-based methodology across center-based and family child care home providers, including hours and days of service and target populations such as dual language learners, children with special needs, and at-risk children.
- Expand provider inclusion and elevate community voices: **Karla Pleitéz Howell** suggested naming family child care home and family, friend, and neighbor providers in the methodology and adding the voices of early educators and families alongside the rate and quality work group.
- Re-elevate the adjustment-factor disparity: As an interim step, **Jordan** suggested the recommendations include aligning and increasing adjustment factors to address the disparity between state preschool and other center-based contracts if not resolved through budget enactment.
- A no-cost workforce idea: **Diana Ramos** shared that her local YMCA allows parents to assist programs as volunteers to meet Medi-Cal volunteering requirements. She suggests this as a no-cost way to support both the workforce and families.

Fernandez Mendoza noted that facilities issues may need a future home within the subcommittees and outlined next steps:

- Sharing the recommendations drafts at the June 9 joint Workforce and Parent Advisory Committee meeting
- Updating recommendations at the August 27 Council meeting and September 10 joint Committee meeting
- Seeking a Council vote on the recommendations at the November 19 meeting.

A question was raised as to why there was not a facility subcommittee. **Ramsey** noted no one volunteered to create a subcommittee on facility needs at the February meeting, but that facilities issues could still be raised through either existing subcommittee.

Lastly, **Ramsey** reminded members that when three or more council members gather for any purpose, it is considered a meeting of the ECPC. Additionally, in observance of the Bagley-Keene open-meeting requirements, the advisory committee meetings provide a properly noticed space for additional feedback.

General Public Comment:

Before the meeting adjourned, **Karin Bloomer** invited verbal comment from the public. Full record of public comments is on pages 52-54 of the [ECPC May 27 transcript](#). Selected comments included the following:

- “On that first page of the draft ECPC recommendation, adopt flex factor to stabilize contract earnings... please include that first sentence—child care providers, it needs to say centers—because it’s totally misleading when you read it as if all providers are included.”
- “Please make sure the agencies understand this [Hold Harmless ending] does not end for family daycare providers... Providers cannot afford to lose any types of subsidized payments that they have earned.”
- “When it comes to stabilization policies, reimbursement protection, and implementation support within California’s mixed delivery system, intentionally include licensed family child care providers... policy should account for the realities of a small-based program without unintentionally excluding them.”
- “We [child care providers, family child care providers or non-licensed providers] are the foundation of early education and we’ve been left outside... we’re losing children to the UPK, it’s happening... So please, let’s be intentional. Please make sure that we are included fully with our full name.”