



## **Early Childhood Policy Council**

### **Agenda and Transcripts**

#### **Virtual Meeting**

Wednesday, August 27, 2025

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

#### **Physical Meeting**

1000 G Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

WestEd, 5th floor, Capitol Room

## **Agenda**

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### **1. Welcome and Introduction**

- Welcome
- Review of agenda

### **2. Improving CalWORKS Child Care**

- Focus group findings
- Council discussion

### **3. Overview of Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant**

- Presentation by the California Department of Education
- Council discussion

### **4. Update on Rate Reform**

- Status update
- Questions from the Council

### **5. General Public Comment**

- Members of the public are invited to provide verbal comment

## Attendance

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### ECPC Council Members:

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza, Carola Oliva-Olson, Cheryl Polk, Claire Ramsey, Donna Sneeringer, Janet Zamudio, Kim Pattillo Brownson, Laura (Kay) Ruhstaller, Lissete Frausto, Lupe Jaime-Mileham, Mary Ann Hansen, Mary Ignatius, Mayra E. Alvarez, Miren Algorri, Natali Gaxiola, Paula Merrigan, Robin Layton, Socorro Martin, Sonia Jaramillo, Tonia McMillian.

### Parent Advisory Committee Members:

Cherie Schroeder, Deborah Corley-Marzett, Lissete Frausto, Mary Ignatius, Patricia Lozano.

### Workforce Advisory Committee Members:

Ann Bonnitto, Debra Ward, Miren Algorri, Patricia Alexander, Tonia McMillian, Virginia Eigen.

### Guests:

*CDE*: Erika St. Andre

*CDSS*: Corey Rodda, Deborah Rawson, Jackie Barocio, Shanice Orum.

### Hosts:

Claire Ramsey, Diana Yactayo, Jateri Willis, Karin Bloomer, Ramee Serwanga, Rebecca Toscano, Alejandra Serrano (SP), Yelka Vargas (SP), Fei Allen (CN), Glen Sha (CN).

## Meeting Transcript

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### 1. Welcome and Introduction

- Meeting features

#### **Karin Bloomer:**

Hey, everyone and welcome to the Early Childhood Policy Council meeting. Before we begin, I'd like to review a few Zoom features with you. We'll enable these features after providing instruction. In a few moments, we'll be offering the closed captioning feature in Zoom. To access this feature, you'll need to locate the live transcript button at the bottom of your Zoom screen and then click show subtitle. This will allow you to view closed captions in English throughout the meeting. In a moment, we'll also offer language interpretation services. I'll now turn things over to our interpreters to describe how you can listen to this meeting in English, Spanish, or Mandarin.

#### **Spanish Interpreter:**

Good morning. In order to provide language access, this meeting will have simultaneous interpretation in English and Spanish. To enable the interpretation if you're using your laptop or desktop, please locate the icon shaped like a globe at the bottom of

your screen, click on language interpretation and then select English. If you are on your phone, iPad, or similar device then locate the three-dot menu in the upper right corner of your screen. Click on language interpretation and select English. [Spanish 00:01:17]. Thank you.

**Mandarin Interpreter:**

[Mandarin 00:01:52].

**Karin Bloomer:**

Thank you. Please select your preferred language channel now, and a few more items of note. We'll be opening up the chat feature for five minutes at the end of each agenda item to invite written public comment. During the final comment period, we will also invite verbal public comment. We'll be asking those who give verbal testimony to limit their time to two minutes in order to invite as many voices as possible to share. The slides we share during today's meeting will be posted on the ECPC webpage within the week. And finally, council members in order to adhere to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Law, you're required to keep your cameras on at all times during the meeting. If you're unable to use your camera due to technical difficulties, please let us know. And now I'll turn the meeting over to Claire Ramsey who'll be chairing this meeting today.

- [Welcome and Meeting Agenda](#)

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thanks, Karin. Hello and welcome all to our third meeting of the year. Happy to be with you all today at the Early Childhood Policy Council meeting. And as you can see from our agenda, we have a full meeting today. Thank you all for attending, all council members and thank you all advisory committee members who are able to be here as well. And finally, I want to thank and appreciate all the many stakeholders who are attending this meeting and sharing your perspectives through public comment. As you heard from Karin, there will be multiple opportunities to do that. For roll call, we will have our support team take note of the council members who are in attendance, so we will not be doing verbal roll call. Okay. Let's do a quick review of our agenda. So, as you can see, we're doing our welcome right now and then we will move into our efforts that are underway right now to consolidate the three stages of CalWORKs Child Care as recommended in the master plan for early learning and care.

Today, we'll have a presentation where CDSS will share our findings from both parent and provider focus groups and ask for the council's additional input on current challenges and potential solutions to improve CalWORKs Childcare. After that presentation and feedback session, we will take a 10-minute break. After the break, we will hear from the California Department of Education or CDE about the Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant Program. Today we have Erika St. Andre, who will provide an overview of the grant program and seek the council's input to help inform the program's direction. And then finally, the council will receive an update on rate reform, and then we will have a general public comment session before we adjourn at noon.

With that, that concludes our welcome statement, and I will then invite written comment on anything in that section. Thanks, Karin.

Thank you. Yeah, so just to recap, this is now a public comment period where we'll open the chat feature for five minutes to allow the public to provide written comment as we move on to the next agenda item. Agenda item two is improving CalWORKs Childcare, and I believe Jackie Barocio from CDSS will be presenting and I will go ahead and share my screen.

## 2. Improving CalWORKS Child Care

- [Presentation](#)

**Jackie Barocio:**

Thanks, Karin.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Forgive me. It just popped off. Let's try that again.

**Jackie Barocio:**

Great. I see it on my end.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Great.

**Jackie Barocio:**

Okay. Well, hi everyone. My name is Jackie Barocio and I'm delighted to be here with you in the ECPC panel to discuss our CalWORKs Child Care Program, talk about the CalWORKs Child Care consolidation project, and to highlight some findings from the family and child care provider focus groups that we've conducted as part of this project. Next, I'll dive into our agenda for this presentation and the discussion. Next slide. Today I'll provide an overview of our CalWORKs Child Care Program and the CalWORKs Child Care Consolidation Project. Then I will share findings from our family and child care provider focus groups that we conducted as a part of the consolidation project. The ECPC panel will have an opportunity to react to these findings. We will close the segment with a summary of recommendations that our focus group participants shared to improve CalWORKs Child Care and the ECPC panel will have an opportunity to share their recommendations as well.

I want to extend my gratitude to the council for the opportunity to capture feedback on our CalWORKs Child Care Program. Our goal at CDSS is to develop recommendations that center family experiences and needs, and we believe that this is a natural platform to work towards that shared goal. Next slide. So to start off, I'll provide a primer or an overview of the CalWORKs Child Care Program. As many of you may know, the CalWORKs Child Care Program is a supportive service for families enrolled in

California's Welfare to Work program. In fiscal year 2023, '24, 138,751 children received child care through the program, enabling their families to seek and secure employment, pursue education, and build a stable financial future through the program. Families also then receive vouchers to help offset the cost of child care. This voucher can be used at a child care center, a family child care home, or an after school program, or to pay a license exempt family, friend or neighbor caregiver.

Currently, the voucher amount lines with county regional market rates. These rates vary by setting, age and include adjustment factors for evening and weekend care and children with exceptional needs. Currently, a family with a preschool age child enrolled in the center-based care in Sacramento County, for example, would receive a voucher payment of \$983 and 3 cents. In Los Angeles County, this same family would receive a voucher payment of \$1,252 and 26 cents. We know that the majority of families receiving CalWORKs Child Care are single parent households, and that without this assistance to pay for child care, it would be unaffordable for them.

CalWORKs is administered by county welfare departments in all 58 counties, and when families are enrolled in child care they are asked if they need... Or when families are enrolled in CalWORKs, they're then asked if they need child care. If they do, families are referred to a child care coordinator. Eligible families are then enrolled into the CalWORK Stage One Program and receive a voucher that they can use towards full-time child care for 24 months unless they request part-time care. Counties and alternative payment program agencies administering the programs are tasked with educating and empowering families to choose the best child care option for their family. The agency that administers their vouchers will also collect attendance records from providers on a monthly basis and then issue a payment directly to the child care provider. Though CalWORKs Child Care is considered a supportive service of the CalWORKs program, families receive child care through three distinct programs, stage one, stage two, and stage three. Families may receive CalWORKs child care benefits long past the time they're actively engaged in the Welfare to Work Program and receiving cash aid that would occur through the CalWORK Stage three program. Next slide.

So before I go into explaining the stages in more detail, we did want to provide and read some quotes from our family focus group participants about the importance of the CalWORKs Child Care Service. The first quote, "Just knowing I have that in place, a system in place where I can work a full-time job, I can go to school. My family may fluctuate depending on income, but just knowing that I have that I don't have to pay full price for childcare. I don't think that I could be doing school and working if I didn't have this assistance to help pay for childcare. I'm grateful that there are quite a few providers to choose from. I'm also grateful that some of the nicer centers accept the vouchers." Next, I will dive into the purpose behind our CalWORKs Care Consolidation Project. Next slide. The goal of the CalWORKs Child Care Consolidation Project is to develop recommendations to streamline the CalWORKs Child Care Programs so that it is one, easier for families to access and navigate, and two, easier for local partners to administer.

The master plan for early learning and care recommends consolidating the CalWORKs Child Care stages. A consolidated coherent system will bring children, their parents, and their early learning and care professionals the support they need to thrive. Consolidating the CalWORKs Child Care stages was also one objective of the Early Childhood Development Act of 2020, which authorized the transition of child care programs to CDSS. Prior to the transition, the California Department of Education or CDE oversaw stages two and three while CDSS oversaw stage one. Next I will share some of the differences between the three CalWORKs Child care stages and outline how these policy differences impact families and child care providers and make the program more challenging to administer. Next slide.

Thank you. The historical intent of this three-stage model of CalWORKs Child Care was to mirror a family's path to self-sufficiency. Although, as most of you know, a family's path is not necessarily neatly linear. The CalWORK Stage One Child Care program is administered by the County Welfare Department or alternative payment program agencies that they contract with. The program begins when a family starts receiving CalWORKs cash aid. During this initial stage, families are automatically enrolled in full-time child care unless they ask for part-time care and their child care is not tied to the hours that they are working or in school. In fiscal year 2023, '24, 52,332 children received stage one vouchers.

CalWork Stage Two Child Care begins when a family is determined to be stable by the county welfare department. On the following slide, we will look at some different county definitions of stability that determine when a family moves to stage two child care in order to better understand how local flexibilities can change a family's experience of the CalWORKs Child Care Program. CalWork stage two is administered by CDSS through contracts with alternative payment program, AP or APP agencies. Once families transition to stage two and become recertified after the end of their 24-month eligibility, the certification is based on their need for each hour the child care they seek plus travel time. Therefore, if a guardian is working part-time for 15 hours per week, they would be certified for 20 hours of care with travel time and lose their authorization for full-time child care. Most child care centers and family child care homes prioritize slots for full-time families.

So once this child care authorization becomes reduced, families risk losing their child care arrangements as well. Since some counties may have different organizations operating stage one child care and stage two child care, when a family is transferred to the stage two program, they may be assigned a new child care coordinator and have to work with a different agency for their childcare needs. This will also mean that their childcare provider receives their payment from a different agency. Families can stay in stage two until they have been off-aid for 24 months. In fiscal year 2023, '24, 36,242 children receive stage two vouchers.

Families that have exhausted their 24 months post-cash aid and stage two childcare transfer to stage three. This stage provides services for families that receive lump sum diversion services when they apply for CalWORKs. Families may remain in stage three until the family's income exceeds 85% of the state median income, or until the children

are over the eligibility age which is 21 years old for children with exceptional needs and 13 years old for children without exceptional needs. In fiscal year 2023, '24, 50,177 children received stage three vouchers. Like stage two, childcare authorization for income eligible families is tied to a family's fee.

Next I will share some of the different definitions of stability that counties have again, which determines when a family's transferred from stage one to stage two. Next slide. Great. So each county is responsible for defining when families are considered stable and move from stage one to stage two. Because of this, in some counties, families stay in stage one childcare longer than other counties. So for example, in Alameda County, stability is defined as when the previously aided adult is no longer receiving CalWORKs cash aid for at least six months. In comparison, in Butte County stability is meeting welfare to work program participation requirements in a work or training related program, and making satisfactory progress for three consecutive months. Another comparison point is in Calaveras County, stability is three months with the same employer.

Next I will share our project timeline for the CalWORKs Consolidation Project. Next slide. The consolidation project is being conducted in three key phases. Phase one involves analyzing federal funding restrictions, the state's data system capacity for a more consolidated system and hosting family and child care provider focus groups to gather feedback on pain points that exist in the current program and to understand what components the new consolidation program should have to improve families experiences. The findings from these analyses, focus groups and recommendations will be compiled into a work group guide, which will serve as a resource for the administrator work group.

Phase two will consist of the public administrator work group, which is scheduled to meet virtually this fall. CDSS is working with the Center for Law and Social Policy to host the work group meetings. CDSS will share the outcome of these meetings at its CCDD community calls. Phase three of this project will consist of the development of a final recommendation report from the work group. Early feedback from the work group may be used prior to the publication of the final report during the fiscal year 2026, '27 legislative and budget cycle. Next, I will provide an overview of our findings from the family and child care provider focus groups. These were conducted this past May and June in partnership with WestEd. Next slide.

CDSS partnered with WestEd to conduct family and child care provider focus groups in May and June. These focus groups were held on the evenings, weekends, and in afternoons to accommodate family and child care provider schedules. Focus group members were given \$125 for sharing their expertise on the CalWORKs Child Care Programs. These stipends were funded by the Child Care and Development Fund. The federal government encourages states to use this funding to pay child care providers and families to provide feedback and to improve programs commiserate with child care policy experts. The opportunity to participate in these focus groups was advertised through the Child Care and development lister and by counties and AP agencies.

We tried to capture California's geographic and racial ethnic diversity with the sample of participants chosen. Families and providers were selected who mirrored the geographic and racial ethnic representation of child care recipients throughout the state according to the child care study, which was funded by the state to understand who uses subsidized child care. The child care provider focus groups also include a range of child care providers from licensed centers, licensed family child care homes, and licensed exempt family friend and neighbor caregivers. Families were chosen who had experience in all three stages of the CalWORKs Child Care. We invited many more participants to join the focus groups. Specifically, we invited 96 families and 40 participants joined the virtual focus groups as well. We invited 48 providers and 27 joined the focus groups. Now I will share the findings from the family focus groups. Next slide.

Since the program is locally administered, family experiences vary dramatically depending on how the program was operated in their county, which makes sense. The design of the current program is to maximize local flexibilities to serve families, and we know that this results in some really amazing experiences for families, but also that programs that experience organizational challenges are not as equipped to offer these amazing experiences. As a result, where a family lives can shape their CalWORKs Child Care experience. As well the second finding isn't surprising, but illustrates how important case work is for the program. Families who felt that they could easily connect with their child care coordinator had the most positive programmatic experience. Next I will highlight some programmatic challenges identified by the families in the focus groups.

Families reported the following programmatic challenges, information gaps concerning child care options. Specifically families said that when they were first enrolled in the program, they had information gaps concerning their child care options. CalWORKs Child Care administrators are responsible for educating families about their child care choices so that they can find the best child care provider for their family, whether that provider is a center, a family child care home, or a family friend or neighbor. Two-thirds of focus group participants mentioned that they only had a basic understanding of their child care choices and a quarter said that they had a hard time understanding their child care options when they did receive their voucher.

Some of the information gaps that were raised were noteworthy. One family said that they found out about CalWORKs Child Care only after they had left the CalWORKs program and that if they had been offered a referral to the program they would have benefited from having access to subsidized child care. Four families mentioned that they were unaware of their option to use the voucher towards license exempt family, friend and neighbor care. One family said that they weren't allowed to use their voucher towards an after-school program, which is an allowable use. In the focus groups, we asked families how easily it was to make changes to their child care vouchers. 12 families said that it was easy for them to make changes, but 19 families said that they had problems in making any changes regarding their child care. Some of this was related to not understanding who they should connect with to make the change or the process being too challenging. Other parent and guardians said that they had issues



finding new providers who accepted their vouchers and also had challenges navigating what their co-payment would be with those providers.

Focus group members were also asked how easy it was for them to submit required programmatic paperwork. 15 said that they had no issues with their required paperwork. 13 cited that they experienced communication issues when they had to submit paperwork. Sometimes these challenges required extensive back and forth with their child care coordinators, and other times they experienced long wait times to hear back from their child care coordinators about the change. One parent or guardian said that it took her child care coordinator four weeks to get back to her. We also asked families how they understood their progression through the program. Eight families in the focus groups understood the CalWORKs stages and their progression through them. While the remaining 32 had an unclear explanation of the difference between the stages. On one level, not understanding the stages could mean that a family transitions through the stages. It's not going as seamlessly as possible.

However, since requirements for child care are different in stage two and three, once a demonstration of the need is required, not understanding the different rules could impact a family's access to child care. Three families said that their transition through the program was not explained and one parent slash guardian said that she relied on her child care provider for an explanation of the program structure. Finally, program administrators are required to send families notices containing information about when their child care eligibility period is ending, appeal process information and programmatic procedures. 22 families said that that communication in the child care notices could have improved if they used simpler language. Next slide.

Thank you. Now I will provide you with an overview of our findings from the child care provider focus groups. 27 providers participated in eight focus groups throughout May and June and through the focus groups, we found out that child care provider experiences varied depending on how well the organization was operated that paid them. Providers also shared that they were committed to providing care for CalWORKs families, but were frustrated with the operational barriers within the program. Many providers first started serving CalWORKs Child Care families to support their communities and ensure that they provided access to families struggling to find affordable quality child care. Next slide. 12 providers in the focus groups said that they were burdened by late or missing payments and sometimes had to wait for payments for weeks or months. Eight providers said that when their payments were late, they struggled to contact someone at the CalWORKs Child Care Agency to resolve the issue. Five providers said that they were treated with disrespect from the workers at the CalWORKs Child Care Agency. One worker told a provider that she should, "Get another job if she wanted her payment on time." Nine providers said that they felt like they had to put in leg work to chase the agency issuing their subsidy payment.

This is illustrated by the following quote, "New providers don't know they have to chase the county every month. I learned that the hard way." Five providers said that their payments were delayed when families were moved to different agencies as they were transitioned to a new stage. Six providers said that they experienced no payment issues

when a family moved to a different agency, and that the transition worked smoothly. Six providers said that their agency's reliance on paper attendance sheets caused payment delays, and five complained about receiving their payments via check because it often got lost in the mail.

Next slide. 18 child care providers reported that they experienced communication issues. 10 providers said that they would often find out about changes regarding a family's childcare subsidy from the family instead of the agency. This reversed flow of information not only created confusion about their professional responsibilities, such as new documentation requirements or procedural changes, but also made providers appear uninformed or unprepared in front of families.

As a result, some providers felt their credibility and trustworthiness was undermined, especially when they could not immediately explain or implement new rules. Providers also said that they lacked knowledge about the policy differences between stage one, two, and three. They also said that program rules and policies were communicated to them in a confusing and unclear manner. One provider shared, "Nobody explains the difference between stage one, two, or three. You have to figure it out on your own."

Next slide. Council members, as you listen to the findings from the family and child care provider focus group, we wanted to just create the space to hear from you which of these experiences resonated with you and that you want to echo. Are there any other problems that families and child care providers may be experiencing within the CalWORKs Child Care program that you just want to add for awareness and consideration? Thank you.

- **Council Discussion**

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thanks, Jackie. We appreciate that presentation, and want to lift up the thanks in the chat that Lupe put out to Parent Voices, who helped us recruit the families that participated in the focus group. Huge thanks to them for that collaborative effort. We do want to acknowledge that people mentioned it was noisy in the room. We do have a leaf blower outside the window, and we think that's what's causing the noise. Apologies. We're hoping it's almost done and we won't have the background noise.

As Jackie just mentioned, we really wanted to create space at this time for a discussion with our ECPC council members, excuse me, to discuss these two questions, and I'll just repeat them. As you listen to the findings from the focus groups, which of these experiences resonate with you? Then the second question is, are there other issues that families and child care providers experience with the CalWORKs Child Care program that you want to add to our understanding of these experiences throughout the child care system in CalWORKs?

Please raise your hand if you'd like to add to this discussion, and we will begin calling on people. I see Donna has her hand up, so we'll start with you, Donna.

**Donna Sneeringer:**

Good morning, everyone, and thank you, Jackie, for the presentation. As someone who's worked on the administration side of CalWORKs Child Care for decades, I am very appreciative of the efforts to streamline and make the system better for parents and for providers. I think a lot of the comments really resonated. My agency, the Child Care Resource Center, operates CalWORKs Child Care in two counties, and the differences between the two counties give us a lot of opportunity to look at where some of the challenges are.

In Los Angeles County, the stage one contract is subcontracted to the child care agencies through the LA Alliance, and it really allows us to enroll a family in stage one and continue that support throughout their journey. In San Bernardino County, the county administers stage one, and the stability definition is problematic. There is a lot of back and forth for families, a lot of back and forth for providers because of how they have defined stability.

I could hear that in some of the comments, that you're not sure who's paying you, you don't know who you're supposed to contact, and we struggle with that on the administrative end as well. The other piece that I do want to lift up is how critically important that case manager is, that child care coordinator, as you called them. They have different names around the state.

I will say that one of the challenges that we have faced is with all of the changes that have gone through our child care system in the last five years, post-pandemic, a lot of changes in payment, a lot of different payments, a lot of multiple payments, paying people differently, and having a different stipend involved, that that has created a lot of confusion, I think, for the agencies and for providers. We also have gone through a pretty rapid expansion, and our caseloads are very, very high.

When you start looking at the individual service that we want to be able to provide to families, we can't do that if a case worker is carrying a caseload of 250 families, it just doesn't work. I do think that there's some work that needs to be done, thinking about what the important value add is of having case workers, having that frontline staff to be able to work with parents and providers to make sure their experience is as smooth as possible, and just look forward to continuing to work with all of you as we try to make this program better for everyone.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thanks, Donna. Next, we have Miren. Then just so everyone knows, we'll be taking a comment from in the room from Tonia, and then go back to online. Miren next and then Tonia.

**Tonia McMillian:**

I was going to speak for Miren.

**Miren Algorri:**

Thank you so much. I'm sorry I was late, so I missed a part of the presentation, but the part that I got to listen to, I appreciate. I just want to mention that family child care providers across California, we play a vital role in supporting families participating in CalWORKs. As union representatives, we are seeking clarity on the proper channels of communications when the counties, as it was mentioned, when they subcontract these services to various organizations.

To get to the point, we are requesting a comprehensive list of county subcontractors and their contact information in order to facilitate collaboration moving forward. We understand that maybe there are some legal constraints that may limit subcontractors' ability to engage directly with our union representatives. If that is the case, then we would like to request the names and contact information of those county representatives, including phone numbers and email addresses.

As it was mentioned through the findings, providers were not, nor parents, were receiving their notice of actions, some parents' services had already been terminated without parents or providers knowing this, payments have been delayed. We would like to request that list of subcontractors or county representatives with their phone numbers and email addresses, so we can address any issues that arise in the future. Thank you so much.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thanks, Miren. Tonia, just wanted to confirm if you also have a comment.

**Tonia McMillian:**

I did not. Miren had sent me a note, and she made it on time to make her own comment. Thank you, Miren.

**Miren Algorri:**

Thank you, Tonia.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thanks. We'll go to Mary now.

**Mary Ignatius:**

Good morning, everyone. Obviously, we need more than 20 minutes for this very complex issue, but grateful to have the opportunity to lift some things up. I just wanted to share that for Parent Voices, a lot of our work has been looking at the CalWORKs child care system, and trying to remove some of the greatest harms and obstacles that families face and accessing their CalWORKs child care.

It is an entitlement when you enter the CalWORKs Cash Aid program. Back in 2019, we won an effort called Stage One From Day One, and that was really to make sure that, and because there's 500 participants listening, I just want everyone to hear, a family can get, I think now it's 24 months of uninterrupted child care without having to do one Welfare to Work activity. They are signing up for the program, and they are securing

full-time child care for their family without having to attend a Welfare to Work meeting, to do job club, to go to school, go to work.

They can use it to go to therapy. It is intended to stabilize the family, so then the child is in the care that they need, and the parent is able to do what they need to do to help them get through and build their economic security. What we're finding out, though, even though this passed in 2019, there are still so many families who are entering the program who are not getting that child care and not being informed of it. That is a huge problem that we think really needs to be addressed.

Then one other piece to that policy that is really, really important, because as your focus group findings showed, families aren't getting all of the information to make the best choices for themselves, and one of them is that when they leave Cash Aid, that they're eligible for care for 24 months post-Cash Aid. One of the policies we put into that law was that all families who leave Cash Aid, after 18 months, they would get a notice that they are still eligible for stage two child care for six months.

In those focus groups, all 40 of those families said that none of them had gotten a notice. What is DSS doing to make sure that stage two contractors are sending out that 18 month notice? Is it a requirement? Is it automated? Is it up to the worker to determine that? A lot can change in 18 months. Maybe they didn't need the care when they first transitioned, but at any time, they might have now needed care. If they don't know it, they're losing out on that precious voucher.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thanks, Mary. We can take that specific question about the notices back along with the broader feedback you just provided. Thank you, and we will respond back with an answer on the notice question. Let me go to Deborah now. Thank you.

**Deborah Corley-Marzett:**

Good morning, everyone, and thank you, Jackie. I'm just going to make this as quick as possible. My first question is, how many days does CalWORKs have to reimburse providers? Is it more than 21 days as other stages? Is it 21 days or shorter? How many days, and that's a question that I know providers and everyone here would like to know. You also mentioned that there's 138,751 children that's receiving CalWORKs. That is great, but we also need to serve more families and open more slots.

I wanted to say that. Thank you. Jackie, you mentioned that, and I need clarity. You mentioned parents can stay on CalWORKs program for 24 months, but then you also said unless it's part-time. Can you tell me what's the difference in time, if it's part-time or full-time? You also mentioned stability. Stability is important. You said that each county might have a different definition of stability. We have 58 counties, 58 different definitions of stability. We feel they're stable here in this county.

We feel stability should come here in this county. There should be one, as far as I would think, one good definition in the counties of what stability is, because the stability is different in each county, then the rules are going to be different in each county. Some

counties, as you know, are very close to each other. I might move to this county, now I'm under this definition. If I go to this county, now I'm under this definition. Some changes can be a little bit more, give more hardship for the parents.

You also mentioned, Jackie, that some parents had a difficult problem in finding child care providers who accepted their vouchers. Now, I would think it's interesting. Why would you think that a provider would not accept the voucher? Could it also be a reason of very slow, slow, slow, very slow, slow, slow, slow, slow reimbursements? I also have a question.

When a parent goes to stage one CalWORKs program, are they also informed of information such as if a parent is studying, going to school, do they receive that information that, "You know what, if you're going to school, you also can receive some study time?" Lack of information like that makes a difference in the child care that's forgiven to the child and the services that the parent is actually receiving. Lack of information creates problems.

Last but not least, lack of knowledge or no knowledge at all, DSS should create webinars to inform providers exactly what stage one, two, and three, et cetera means, the requirements, and how it works. Having lack of information is worse than having no information, and that's what providers receive. Thank you.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thanks, Deborah. Appreciate that. Deborah, just point that Lupe confirmed in the chat that the 21-day payment requirement applies to all the stages. Just wanted to get that answer. Jackie, I don't know if you had any information to provide to Deborah, thank you. Just quickly though, because I know we have Janet who also-

**Jackie Barocio:**

Yes, yes. Very quickly, Deborah, on your question about part-time, full-time, confirming that 24 month applies to both. Sorry if I misspoke in my statements. Then to your question about study time, study time should be included in the calculations, but I think you've heard from focus groups, overall families were saying sometimes they're not informed of everything, so taking that back, Deborah, as an additional flag.

**Deborah Corley-Marzett:**

Okay, thank you. You did say Dr. Lupe said that stage one CalWORKs also has 21 days to reimburse providers. That's correct?

**Lupe Jaime-Mileham:**

That's correct.

**Deborah Corley-Marzett:**

Okay, but the state does know that's a big problem because it does not happen. That is a major problem across the state. That has to be corrected literally today. Let's just be real about it. It needs to be corrected yesterday. That has to be, providers can't keep providing the care and keep waiting for reimbursements. It just doesn't work like that. In all honesty, to know that that's truly a problem, we have to correct that.

It's got to be corrected, and somebody's got to... Whatever way you want to deal with it, deal with it. Those contractors from stage one, they need to understand this is important and it's priority. No more excuses, you guys. No more excuses. Thank you so much.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thanks, Deborah. Appreciate all your input into this discussion. Janet, I know you had your hand up, and I see it's gone down again. Did you still want to add a comment?

**Janet Zamudio:**

Yes, thank you. I didn't put it down. I probably at some point did click on something, but thank you for checking in. I appreciate the work of this streamlining and this conversation today, the work of the focus groups. I have some questions, and everything that was presented really resonates. The questions are really coming up from once upon a time, having been one of the AP caseworkers, working with families, also working to provide payments to providers.

I'm just wondering what experience families have when they are moved through cases with regard to assigned case managers. Do we even know if the same case manager stays with the family as they're being moved through stages? Does that change? What experience do families have then? Just wondering what that looks like. Then when families move between counties or from city to city, we've often encountered issues with families continuing to maintain stable child care as they move counties, or from cities, or if they need to transfer different organizations to continue their child care being paid for.

Another thing that's come up after hearing the discussion is the notifications that families, and I assume even providers get, are really, really hard to read. I just saw Mary pop in a comment with regard to this, the notices of action, they're just convoluted. They're really hard to read, really hard to understand. I think that needs to be looked at, and if a family doesn't agree with the decision, knowing that they have appeal rights, all of that.

It's just not easy to understand the process with how to manage a disagreement with the decision. I did want to lift up the stability definition, because that seems a little of a narrow, window having a three to six month window in different definitions across different counties. It seems like this might be aligning with typical trial periods for work, and that three to six months is really short to deem someone stable, especially if they're starting a new job. My employer, for example, has a one-year trial period, so I'll just throw that out.

Then I had a question around caseloads. Donna, thank you for stating the 200 plus number. That's incredible and outrageous. What is the typical caseload number for each worker across the counties and in the state? Having been in one of those roles before, I'll share my experience that it's really important and critical for organizations to have the ability and the resources to help train those who are front-facing with families and working with providers, the case managers or what we're calling them.

Often, as I had also experienced being in those positions, you don't hear the praise, you don't get the thank-yous, you don't get any of that. You get all the concerns, all the issues, all the needs that need to happen and what you need to do. You only hear about issues and problems that are coming up.

It's really hard for somebody who's coming into a position like that who's not paid well either, who's acting as someone who has to implement and adhere to program guidelines, know what they are, interpret those, help families, be a counselor, be in many positions, that we just really need to support the people who are in this front-facing roles, working with families and with providers, and having this ongoing training to help them remain in an empathetic space while being a problem solver, being reflective in work, and having some kind of reflective supervision is super important.

The last thing I'll just state is having worked in, many people on the council already know, I worked at Bananas many years in Children's Council of San Francisco as well. One of the things that I would hear as I engaged in resource and referral and working directly with families and with providers is some private pay providers saying, "Oh, I don't take subsidized children," or, "I'm not going to take subsidized children. There's just too many issues with the subsidized system." I just want to lift that up as another issue.

I appreciate Deborah bringing up the payment windows and all of that, because providers really know the issues that are happening in subsidized child care, and they outright will say, for those who are not enrolling children who come with vouchers or don't have a contract, saying, "I don't take subsidized children." It's really hard to hear, but it's really, in other words, saying there's a problem with the system. One of those problems is the pay is low, it's bureaucratic, the way the payments happen, et cetera, et cetera, everything we already know. I just want to lift that up as another issue as we're having this discussion. That was it, thank you.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thanks, Janet. Appreciate all those comments. We have time for one more comment. If anyone, right now we don't have any hands raised, if there's one more comment, we will then be moving back to Jackie to talk about the recommendations we heard from both the parent and provider focus groups. Then we will have another 20 minutes for discussion.

Want to see if there's any last comment here on the findings before we move into the recommendations. Okay. I'm not seeing anyone raise their hand, so I'm going to turn it back. Oh, I'm sorry. Ann, please.

**AnnLouise Bonnitto:**

Good morning. I do know that there's been work with the tribes, but my question is what in the demographics, what was the percentage of tribal families that actually participated, number one. Number two, when you do the outreach, and I do know that there is a tribal liaison, does that individual or that office actually reach out to the large consortiums that are here in California?



Among the three, they represent across 40 tribes, which would then be a great place to start, especially because many of the kids that are on our programs would be eligible to be in CalWORKs. As we know, they're dually eligible. Maybe looking a little bit into that, because I know that our families sometimes don't get any of the information or actually don't have it as readily available. That's something else to think about changing the process.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thanks, Ann. Just want to flag that Lupe put in the chat, both that we'll take these comments back, and really appreciate lifting up the need for tribal representation, tribal outreach. Also, we'll be connecting you with our Office of Tribal Affairs so we can further discuss those issues. Thank you.

With that, we will turn it back to Jackie for the next section of the presentation. I'm sorry, Jackie, before you start, I just want to say the leaf blower is no longer going. Is it okay for the sound if we don't mute the room? Okay. Thank you for all dealing with that.

- [Presentation Continued](#)

**Jackie Barocio:**

Awesome. Well, thank you all so much for that very thoughtful discussion. I'll now highlight the CalWORKs childcare program recommendations that were lifted up from the focus groups. I'll start with the recommendations that the childcare providers shared to improve their experience in the program, to make it more attractive to new providers, and then also increase the childcare options afforded to our CalWORKs childcare families.

Specifically, providers shared the following recommendations to improve the CalWORKs program. They recommended system modernization with direct deposit, online payment tracking, and digital submission processes, a clear onboarding through welcome packets, comprehensive handouts, and mentorship programs. Having professional recognition as partners rather than administrative burdens, as some may feel. Payment transparency with clear calculations, timelines, and reliable processing, and improved communication through regular meetings, and consistent guidance. Next slide.

I'll now highlight the CalWORKs childcare program recommendations that were lifted up by families. Those included enhancing communication and improving communication with clearer notices, simplified processes, and improved response times; having individualized support from childcare coordinators with regular check-ins and personalized assistance; process improvements through streamlined paperwork, online portals, and mobile applications; resource sharing about community services and provider information.

Then lastly, staff training to improve service delivery and family understanding. Again, I really want to pause here to thank the families and the childcare providers who participated in these focus groups and shared their experiences with us. We are truly

grateful for the time and expertise, and also are grateful for the time that we took today to build upon those and flag new additional items. Next slide.

Again, another panel discussion. Really hearing from council members, based off of these specific recommendations, were there any that spoke to you? What were recommendations? What would your recommendations be as solutions to these problems? Then how can the childcare program be improved?

- **Council Discussion**

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thanks, Jackie. As she just mentioned, we're going to have another discussion section that will go for up to 25 minutes about recommendations. As you can see, some of this was obviously thematically connected to the findings around communication, around partnership, around information sharing, and available resources. Again, please ask that anyone who has a comment to raise their hand. I'll start with Tonia, who's in the room with us.

**Tonia McMillian:**

Okay. I want to kind of piggyback on what Janet, I think she said this earlier, and I don't see it in the recommendation, but there definitely needs to be some internal work done, especially when it comes to the analyst, changing whoever the analyst that is assigned to a family, they may leave, they may quit, and now there's a new analyst, but there's no information shared with the parent, because it happened to me.

That part of the recommendation is that there needs to be some cleanup within their internal staffing process, or guide, or something like that.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thank you. I'm hearing both the internal continuity for families and connection, and then also, I heard the external connections for families who may need to move from one agency to another, from a county to an agency who maybe move counties or service areas.

**Tonia McMillian:**

Or even if the family's not moving. If you have a new staff person assigned to you, then they need to be informed of that.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Whenever there's a transition.

**Tonia McMillian:**

Exactly.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thank you. That's really helpful. Then I see Natali has her hand up, please.

**Natali Gaxiola:**

I just have to say, I really appreciate being able to see all these connections and even things that I don't directly work with as a preschool teacher, but I do support families in various ways. One of the biggest challenges that I feel that has been consistent over the 23 years that I've worked with families is the lack of transparency in the sense of a process, not only in what the process is, but who is in charge of this or the responsibilities. Even as parents, I feel like a lot of times they're given like, "Oh, contact," I'm going to use an example just to make it relatable for me, like the WestEd Regional Center, or contact this, contact that. But there isn't a clear support system to help them contact or help them go through. I feel like even on the parent aspect, how do you ask for something you don't know you can ask for? And then on the providing the services and the administrative, it's how do we connect to those parents?

I feel like I'm that person in the middle sometimes because I'm the teacher that deals with them on a regular basis and tries to support. But I also have to be realistic about my capacity and what my focus is. And I feel like there's a lot of overlap and a lot of saying, "Oh, the child care provider can support with this or kind guide or this." I think there's a lot of assumptions, but there's really nobody actually supporting along the way. So I feel like if there's a breakdown of a task analyst of what the system is, who's responsible and how we can support that or the role that we play in that support would be helpful. I don't know if that made sense or not, but that was just my little input.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thanks, Natali. What I'm hearing from you both is the responsibility to communicate but also to guide a family to additional resources so they feel like they have a partner in understanding what's available to them. I also heard that connection point to disability resources in particular that families may not know are additionally available in addition to what availability they might find within the child care space to support their child around inclusion or other disability supports and services. Thank you for that feedback.

I did want to note that Mary had put a comment in the chat. Mary, I see there's a number of hands, but also please let me know if you'd like to say any of that out loud.

Next I'll go to Andrea.

**Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:**

Good morning everyone, and thank you, Jackie. The information was amazing to hear and I always appreciate your insight. A couple of things resonated with me, the findings and the recommendations. A lot of the findings are basically things that we've known in the field; communication issues, having issues, accessing resources, accessing the people who are doing the job. One of the things in lieu of recommendations, I've had a lot of conversations, at least in Los Angeles County, with people who are running the CalWORKs system, and the county has faced significant cuts to their funding to be able to support the people who are actually running the program, the caseworkers and so forth.

We really have to look at this from a holistic perspective and bring those people to the table so that they can tell us the issues that they're facing on the ground. They're doing the work, they're trying to meet the needs of these families, and they're not able to. They've cut staffing. They've had to squeeze blood out of a turnip like the rest of us have. And so I think that would be... I know Naram personally, and I know he would be very open to a lot of these conversations to help meet the needs that the families are facing.

But again, I really feel this is a communication issue on several different levels. The system level, being able to communicate with families and providers and connecting the providers and their spaces, their open spaces to the families. If families had the opportunity to go into a portal or something to see what was available, providers had the opportunity to go in and put in their open spaces, I think they would have more of an informed choice to what was available, if it met their needs or not, if they were the providers were open seven days a week. All of those different aspects would be able to be updated in real time.

I know when you're, as a mom who was looking for child care back in the day, knowing what was actually available was very valuable. And we're in crisis if we're trying to find child care. We don't have the luxury of, "Oh, I can wait. Oh, I can wait a month," like someone had mentioned for a caseworker to get back to me. No, I need to get back to work or my child doesn't eat. So it's really one of the things that I think the recommendations should be would be to focus on communication and really helping improve that system. And again, please tap on us if you need ideas. We would be happy to help.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thank you, Andrea. Really appreciate that. Hearing loud and clear the communication needs that wherever the consolidation lands ultimately, that here and now there's room for improved communications and resources around that. And then also just hearing needing to make sure we are listening and partnering with counties who administer so that we can receive their feedback and understand their challenges directly. Thank you. Janet?

**Janet Zamudio:**

Yes, thank you. I want to start with a huge appreciation of Parent Voices for partnering and connecting families to this focus group. I think it's next year that they'll be celebrating their 30-year anniversary, and this year marks Mary's 20-year anniversary leading Parent Voices California. So congrats, Mary. Just had to do a quick shout out for her and Parent Voices.

I wanted to again lift up the notion of stability, and maybe that becomes another focus area as a recommendation, stability all around. Because what we know to be true, as long as families have stable child care, we're able to provide stability for providers and what they're able to give to families and in their environments and what they're able to provide in terms of the ongoing care. It should be a focus area that hits upon the transitions, the families moving within programs, within counties, with getting payments

out. I'm kind of hearing this stability thing coming up and potentially as a focus area, so I just want to lift that up.

I really again appreciate this conversation because it's really focused on how to improve things and make things work better. So I'm really looking forward to everybody who's in attendance and hearing from those from our fields about what recommendations or what things have been working in their organizations that could be helpful to this conversation. Thank you.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thanks, Janet. Really appreciate you lifting up the theme and focus area of stability and understanding that stable child care is really supporting everyone, the child, the families, the provider, the whole infrastructure of child care, and appreciate that also as being sort of a counterpoint to the transition. The more stability we can provide, hopefully that will minimize transitions and negative consequences of transitions.

Yes, Deborah?

**Deborah Corley-Marzett:**

I don't want to overemphasize, but I do just want to add to the communication. It's just interesting that providers are expressing lack of communication as well as the parents are talking about communication. But as Janet and I believe the young lady Andrea before me, what about the communication of the case manager? Because I know DSS has meetings with the contractors, those who are in charge of those who are doing the work. But what about having contact and meetings again with those again who are doing the actual work? Why not have meetings from case managers with all those counties? Let's find out if they know exactly not just to say their roles, but what they're doing? Because in that conversation you'll find out how much they really know. A big problem also happens is not just lack of information but wrong information given to those case managers which trickle down to the parents and where the parents and the children and the families we serve suffer.

So I just want to put that out. As the state continues to meet with the contractors and their managers, how about having meetings with those who do the work so you can hear what's going on there also. Thank you.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thanks, Deborah. Hearing the need to hear more directly from those who are doing the work. And I think that point about wrong information given to a case manager has huge ripple effects because it trickles down in all sorts of ways to people using the services on the ground and people providing the child care.

Let me turn it over to Lissete.

**Lissete Frausto:**

Hi, good morning everyone. I personally am a parent myself of a young child. She's currently two. So I've been recently also going through a lot of the processes. I haven't actually worked with CalWORKs, but I've been going through the California assistance

payment program, which obviously does kind of the same work as well. A lot of it is communication like they've been saying, like Andrea was saying. Sometimes it's like, "You can wait." It's like, "No, we can't wait." It's like as parents, we need to work to be able to provide for our families and to be able to feed our children, especially in this economy in this moment. And so parents cannot wait.

We need to be able to also know communication. And the reason why I say communication is because many of the times we receive emails, and I say we because I've also received emails, but not a lot of parents are tech-savvy. Or you'll receive a notice in the mail, but sometimes that notice doesn't even tell you anything. I read it sometimes and I'm just like, "Okay, well, what does this mean?" So maybe just more specific clarification for parents. And also providing it in their specific home language, because obviously we do have families that speak another language aside from English. So making sure that those communications are received for that specific family in their home language, but also that they understand it.

So making sure that the case workers are there. Obviously I know they have a lot of caseloads, so maybe making sure that they're able to connect with the families. I understand we have a lot of families and there's maybe not a lot that can be done, but as a parent organizer myself as well, one of my goals, and this is an ultimate goal as well of our organization, is to be able to build relationships with our families, so making sure to connect directly with them to know their specific needs that they have and be able to find any resources or any support that they need.

Families are in dire need in these moments, and I can identify myself with that. To be honest, I'm shaking because every time I hear all this information it's like, "I connect with the families because I know what it feels like." So for me, I'm that voice for those families that are not able to be in here in this moment. So just making sure that we have clear communication for families because many of them work two jobs morning and night and it's very hard to navigate the system that should be able to be there to support families and make it easier, not hard, as well as for providers as well. Thank you.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thanks, Lissete. I want to thank you for sharing your personal experiences and being a representative voice for other parents who are experiencing the immediate need for child care. I also want to echo what you've lift up related to communications, again, linking back to the clarity of our notices, the need for home language translation of notices to make sure people understand the information, and then us being very thoughtful about our communication methods given the technical knowledge, needs, or challenges that people may experience as they're going through this process.

We still have time to continue this discussion. Again, Mary, I did want to check to see if you wanted to lift up your comment from the chat verbally as well?

**Mary Ignatius:**

Yeah, it was related to how families can maximize having the CalWORKs voucher while also either choosing to use Head Start or State Preschool or a General Child Care

Center slot. Oftentimes we hear from families that they didn't know about it, especially when they're using Head Start or something for their four-year-old or five-year-old, and then going to kindergarten they're not clear that they actually could have used their CalWORKs voucher up until their child's 13th birthday. So there has to be some touch points with families along their CalWORKs journey to just check in and see how their child care is working for them and if there's anything else they would need or want. And then if there are anything they are eligible for, to be able to provide that so they can do what they need for their family.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thank you, Mary. Appreciate you lifting that up. I think it really underscores that CalWORKs Child Care itself is complicated with three stages, and then you layer on all the many pieces of our system, which parents should have access to but may struggle to understand what their opportunities are and what the availability is and what can be paid for. Jackie made that earlier point about a parent saying they would've liked to use after school care, but were told that that wasn't available. And I think that also loops back to Deborah's point about wrong information then limits someone's opportunities.

This has been incredibly helpful to hear from all of you because then I think we're both hearing additional points that we may not have received directly from the focus groups, but also I think everyone can see how thematically connected many of these points are and how much we can actually have a lot of clarity already about some of the things that need to happen as we work through this CalWORKs consolidation project.

I did want to give anyone else an opportunity who would like to make a comment during this time. We will have our break after this, but we still have additional time available if there are more comments or feedback people would like to share.

I'm again going to close out this session with a huge thank you to everyone who participated in our focus groups and to Parent Voices for helping us find those participants, to all the work that went in to run the focus groups and to hear from the families, and then to all of you for today's robust and really helpful discussion.

Oh, I'm sorry. Kay, please did you want to? Okay.

So thank you again. I did mention we were going to go to a break, but I want to hold space first and take a moment of silence. I don't know if all of you are aware of this, but there was a shooting at a school in Minneapolis this morning where at least two children were killed. And as a group that is supporting and caring for children, I know this hits all of us very hard. So we'll take that moment of silence now before our break.

Thank you all. I know this is a group that will take the moment of silence and also will take action, because it's unacceptable. Violence against children has to stop. So with that, I will turn it over to Karin so we can take our break.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Thank you, Claire. We're going to open up the chat for public comment about this agenda item and really welcome members of the public to contribute to the conversation

we just had. And at the same time, we'll be taking a 10-minute break, and so we will see you back here at 10:33. Thanks so much.

- **BREAK**

**Karin Bloomer:**

Welcome back, committee members back, members of the public. Council members, if you're with us and as long as your camera is working, if you could please turn them back on. It's so great to see you and be able to engage with you on camera. I'm going to turn it to the chair, Claire, to just briefly introduce our next guest and segment.

### 3. Overview of Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant

- **Presentation**

**Claire Ramsey:**

Thank you again, Karin, and welcome back, everyone. Happy to be with you all again after the break. And I also just want to thank everyone who provided comments during public comment. We received a lot, so thank you very much. We will be taking all that public comment and incorporating it into the feedback we've received.

Now we're going to move on to agenda item three. We are really excited to have today Erika St. Andre from the Department of Education who is here with us to provide an overview of the Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant, and then to hear some of your feedback on the elements that will be presented to you today. So with that, let me turn it over to Erica. I welcome her and thank her for being here.

**Erika St. Andre:**

Yes, hi, Claire. Thank you. Are you able to hear me all right? Thank you so much. Karin, will you be sharing my slides?

**Karin Bloomer:**

I will be.

**Erika St. Andre:**

Fabulous. Thank you so much.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Of course.

**Erika St. Andre:**

Hello, everyone. Thank you for granting me some time to present to you about California's Comprehensive Literacy State Development or CLSD grant. My name is Erika St. Andre. I'm an education programs consultant in the professional learning support division at the California Department of Education where I lead the CLSD grant work. My purpose here this morning is to give you information about the CLSD grant



program and to seek your input on how to effectively disseminate information about this grant work to the field, as well as any opportunities for partnership in upcoming grant work. Next slide, please.

The CLSD grant is an opportunity for states to apply for federal funding to support literacy instruction from birth through grade 12. It aims to improve student achievement and literacy by funding states to develop, revise, or update comprehensive literacy plans, and it allows states to provide targeted subgrants to local educational agencies, or LEAs, to implement evidence-based programs and high quality literacy instruction based on their state's literacy plan. California was awarded this grant back in 2019 and then again in 2024. Next slide please.

There are four federal priorities for this grant. The first two are, number one, projects that incorporate state education agency partnerships with institutions of higher education, so those would be colleges and universities. Number two, projects designed to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports to meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses. Next slide please.

And the rest are number three, projects designed to promote education equity and adequacy and resources and opportunity for underserved students. In California, we will focus the grant work on addressing the literacy needs of underserved students, including multilingual learners, to support screening for reading difficulties such as dyslexia, and evidence-based instructional approaches tailored to students' specific needs.

And number four, projects that support students and their families at key transitional stages in their education by ensuring coordinated high-quality professional development for educators in these transitional stages. This fourth priority is one area I would like to focus on and get feedback from you today, specifically ensuring effective supports for students, families, and educators in the transition from preschool and child care settings into elementary school settings. Next slide, please.

Based on a needs assessment, we disseminated to county offices of education and feedback we received from our internal and external partners. In our proposal, we outlined three main objectives. The first is to leverage state capacity and partnerships, including coordination with institutions of higher education and subgrantees, to ensure pre-service teachers and in-service teachers have sufficient and consistent knowledge and skills to support evidence-based literacy instruction, intervention, and assessment. Next slide please.

Objective two is to revise California's Comprehensive State Literacy Plan to include updated evidence-based practices and guidance documents, as well as promising practices and implementation guides from the 2019 CLSD subgrantees. Next slide please.

Objective three is to continue to build local capacity to establish, align, and implement literacy initiatives that emphasize family and community involvement and expand educational options, ensuring equity and student access and addressing the needs of California's most vulnerable children, particularly related to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on students and educators. Next slide, please.

The State Literacy Plan was originally adopted by the State Board of Education in March of 2021. Its purpose was to align and integrate state literacy initiatives, content standards, and state guidance documents to support teachers of students from birth through grade 12. It was also created to support continuous improvement by connecting essential literacy guidance to support comprehensive and integrated implementation of high-quality literacy programs at the state and local level, focusing on the age and grade band goals for literacy achievement that were established in the common core state standards in the English language arts English language development framework, and to serve as a model for local literacy plans.

Since its adoption, we have used the State Literacy Plan as the foundational document for developing the request for applications for the sub-grant competition, as well as providing extensive professional learning on the State Literacy Plan and its accompanying documents and resources to the named sub-grantees. Next slide, please.

There are several audiences for the State Literacy Plan. This document is intended to provide information on a variety of levels, reflecting the system's approach that California uses to transform education and move the needle for literacy achievement. Site, district, and county administrators can use the State Literacy Plan as a resource for implementing statewide literacy guidance and initiatives in a coherent way through a system-wide comprehensive and integrated literacy model. The State Literacy Plan also provides a model for local literacy continuous improvement processes, and a preview of future statewide literacy activities.

Teachers and paraprofessionals of all grades and disciplines, teacher librarians, education specialists, English language development specialists, educator mentors, literacy coaches, and reading specialists and professional learning providers will also learn about the comprehensive and integrated literacy model and how each of their roles in collaboration with site, district, and county administrators contributes to and is responsible for student achievement and literacy.

University faculty in teacher preparation programs will find the State Literacy Plan to be a useful resource for pre-service teachers and in-service teachers that brings alignment and coherence to California's literacy guidance and initiatives.

Parents and communities can use the State Literacy Plan as a resource to understand the big picture of literacy in California, including how resources and guidance are being leveraged across the system to improve literacy outcomes for all students and their important role in that system. Next slide please.

Each of the sections listed has had organizational updates to support a better flow to the document overall. After it was initially adopted in March of 2021 and we disseminated the State Literacy Plan when we were awarded the new round of funding in 2024, we convened the State Literacy Team to provide updates and revisions, and those are reflected here. Within California's approach to literacy instruction, each of the listed items has a fully developed explanation of what it does to serve California's students with supporting information in corresponding appendices. Next slide please.

The continuous improvement process section has been updated with links to resources and research in each age and grade span in the literacy planning toolkit, an explanation of each step of the continuous improvement process at the state and local level, outcomes and evidence-based practices from the 2019 CLSD literacy lead agencies, and proposed updated statewide literacy priorities.

The comprehensive and integrated literacy model section has been updated significantly. The image has been revised, though the guidance documents referenced are still there, displayed in a more digestible way for the reader. It depicts a focus on the fact that high-quality literacy instruction occurs within the context of inclusive and equitable systems of schooling, featuring high levels of engagement, a focus on continuous improvement, and application of the California's multi-tiered system of support framework. The comprehensive and integrated literacy model described in this section sets the direction for literacy programs statewide by aligning and integrating state literacy initiatives. It also provides guidance and resources for application of the State Literacy Plan continuous improvement process.

At the local level, comprehensive and integrated literacy model can support local education agencies in ensuring literacy programs are leveraging state guidance and resources to meet the specific needs of students. It is a helpful reference guide and source of content for local literacy plans and illustrates that comprehensive literacy instruction exists within California's multi-tiered system of support and layers with the center circles of implementation model outlined in the English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework. Next slide please.

The original sub-grant competition sought to name literacy lead agencies. In 2021, we awarded seven sub-grants to implement three-year small scale pilot projects or model sites to improve literacy outcomes for students. There was one sub-grant for projects for children from birth to age five, three projects for students in grades TK through five, and three sub-grants for projects for students in grades six through 12. There was a heavy focus on teacher professional learning and coaching, support for local educational agencies to develop local literacy plans, and to build statewide capacity around the priorities in the State Literacy Plan. Next slide please.

So again, in 2019, the California Department of Education was awarded \$37.5 million in federal CLSD grant funds to leverage and expand existing statewide infrastructure, guidance, and expertise to bring coherence to the system of literacy supports to improve student outcomes over a period of 5 years. That grant period went from

September 1st, 2021 and is just coming to a close as we speak, August 31st, 2025. We did request and receive a 1-year extension due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Approximately \$40 million was available to fund eligible County Offices of Education to serve as local literacy lead agencies. Each literacy lead agency worked on one of the seven statewide literacy priorities, as described in California's comprehensive statewide Literacy Plan, and the grant awards were between just over \$6 million and near \$5.5 million. Next slide, please.

Through the process of updating the State Literacy Plan, we also updated the statewide literacy priorities to reflect the learning that took place throughout the implementation of the 2019 CLSD grant, as well as robust input from the State Literacy team. Priority one in 2019 was, "Birth to age 5 projects that support early childhood education programs that promote literacy-rich environments and experiences and support the quality of programs and their capacity to support early language and literacy skills, as well as to increase family support by increasing knowledge, skills, and confidence through family-centered curriculum and literacy activities, with special attention to linguistic diversity and equity and access for all."

The updated priority one based on input from the State Literacy team and all of the knowledge we gathered from the 2019 grant, new priority one is, "Birth to age 5 programs that support early childhood educators to build their instructional capacity to support early language and literacy skills and to promote literacy-rich environments and experiences, as well as to increase family support by developing knowledge and skills through family-centered curriculum and literacy activities, with special attention to linguistic diversity." Important to note, with this change is an added focus on the educators in the system and instruction in addition to maintaining the age-appropriate parent focus and literacy-rich environments and experiences. Next slide, please.

In the original State Literacy Plan, there were three statewide literacy priorities in the transitional kindergarten to grade 5 age and grade band, and those were priority two, "T-K to 5 programs that build teacher capacity for tier 1 literacy instruction, including foundational skills, reading comprehension, and best first reading and writing instruction." Priority three was, "T-K programs that build school capacity for effective literacy and comprehensive English language development for English learners, including opportunities to develop biliteracy and primary language instruction whenever possible." And priority four was, "T-K to 5 programs that build school capacity to support students struggling with reading, including, but not limited to, students with disabilities and students with dyslexia."

The updated statewide literacy priority, now priority two encompasses all three of those, and over the course of the 2019 CLSD grant, it became apparent that the division of subgroups in the priorities was not reflective of what actually happens on a school campus. For example, a student can be struggling with reading and also speak a language other than English at home and possibly also have a learning disability of some kind. There was an immediate understanding that all schools in the grant needed to focus on building tier 1 instruction, and that attending to the needs of English-learner

students, as well as students with disabilities, were things that all projects would need to focus on.

With extensive input from the State Literacy team, the existing three elementary priorities were combined into one that encompasses meeting the needs of all students and educators in the system. So the updated priority two now reads, "Build educator capacity for evidence-based structured literacy instruction within a multi tiered system of support, including universal tier 1 instruction and foundational skills, language development, reading comprehension, and writing instruction for all students, including, but not limited to, English-learner and multilingual students with opportunities to develop biliteracy, including integrated and designated English language development, students struggling with literacy, including, but not limited to, students with disabilities and students with dyslexia, and other identified student populations. Next slide, please.

In the 2019 grant priorities five through seven addressed students in middle and high school, they were, priority five, "Grades 6 to 12 programs that build teacher capacity across disciplines for literacy instruction, including peer-to-peer coaching models," priority six, "Grade 6 to 12 programs that build school capacity for effective literacy and comprehensive English language development for English learners, including opportunities to develop biliteracy and primary language instruction whenever possible," and priority seven, "Grade 6 to 12 programs that promote and build school capacity for effective literacy instruction for students with disabilities."

Similar to the elementary priorities, the State Literacy team provided extensive input on combining the three secondary priorities into one that calls out the need for continued focus on tier 1 instruction, that is help in learning to read for students in middle and high school that are still on their path to becoming fluent readers, as well as meeting the needs of all students and educators in the system.

So the new updated priority three now reads, "Build educator capacity in all content areas for evidence-based literacy instruction within a multi-tiered system of support, including universal tier 1 literacy instruction for all students, including, but not limited to, English-learner and multilingual students with opportunities to develop biliteracy, supports for long-term English-learner students and integrated and designated English language development, students struggling with literacy, including, but not limited to, students with disabilities and students with dyslexia, and other identified student populations."

I wanted to show you a map to show you the scale of this grant work thus far and how we hope to expand it. So what's reflected in color here is all of the counties that were represented in the 2019 CLSD grant, 20 out of 58 County Offices of Education came together as seven different consortia, each focused on one of the statewide literacy priorities. And it is our hope and expectation that with this new round of funding, even more parts of California and even more teachers and students across California will have access to the work that these grant funds provide. Next slide, please.

The implementation guide that the priority one team in the 2019 grant developed, I'm going to put a link in the chat for you in a moment so that you can take a look at that, but the priority one project was called the Early Learning Literacy Project, and I wanted to tell you a little bit about their work.

So they were awarded over \$6 million in funding that went from September of 2021 through, as I was saying earlier, we are just wrapping up that project now. They, over the course of those 4 years, have trained and coached hundreds of preschool educators, including educators in family child care settings, head-start settings, state preschool settings, as well as T-K and kindergarten teachers on elementary school campuses. They also purchased thousands of books for classroom and home libraries for the teachers participating in the work, as well as the families that participated in the work, and they held family and community literacy events throughout each year of implementation across the three counties that were represented. And the early learning Literacy project was led by the San Bernardino County Superintendent of schools and they partnered with the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools as well as the Orange County Department of Education.

So as promised, I wanted to see if I could put into the chat here. And I will continue to put a couple of links. I did want to mention that the chat that I just put in here is to our literacy resources repository on a platform called California Educators Together. It does require you to create a login, but the system is completely free to access for anyone and they do not spam you with email or anything like that, so I did just want to put in a plug there for the literacy resources repository.

**Karin Bloomer:**  
Erika?

**Erika St. Andre:**  
Yes.

**Karin Bloomer:**  
Sorry to interrupt. This is Karin. I just want to make sure you do have time for input from council members, so just noting we probably should be turning to that pretty soon.

**Erika St. Andre:**  
Yes, thank you so much. That is actually the next slide, so great timing. We'll go ahead and go to the next slide. Fantastic. Well, I want to thank you all so much for your time. I know that was kind of a very quick overview of many years of work, but I do have two questions that I would like to pose. The first being, in what ways could the CLSD grant project align with work you are doing in the birth to age 5 span? For example, are there other aspects of effective early literacy professional learning that you are aware of? And then the second question being, what opportunities for partnership do you see emerging through this grant in the coming years? And in particular, I'm interested in avenues for dissemination of information about California State Literacy Plan and about the work of the literacy lead agencies. And with that, I will open it up to questions and feedback.

- Council Discussion

**Karin Bloomer:**

Great. And Erika, this is Karin. I can help look for hands raised.

**Erika St. Andre:**

Wonderful.

**Karin Bloomer:**

With that, I do see Natali.

**Natali Gaxiola:**

This was a lot of information. I'm still processing a lot of it. And as a preschool teacher myself and having worked 23 years with children and being trained on various curriculums and having that change throughout the years, I do have a few questions just because this is my day-to-day life with kids and I'm noticing there's a lot of moving pieces in the current early childhood education kind of approach.

One being the age ranges are changing. What preschool used to be and the age range that that serviced has now changed and expanded, which I think it's a great thing. Same thing with the T-K expansion. Now they're dealing with the whole new age range. So I'm wondering how it's being considered and taken into account, especially when you think about preschool. Because I have children that are not 3 yet that started a few weeks ago, and then I have kids that are going to be 5 soon in the same classroom. So making sure that we address all that age range of needs and how that is taken into the consideration with the curriculum. There's a few questions here and I apologize for just rambling on.

Also, what is that? I hear the evidence and research based and I'm wondering what exactly is that research and what it looks like. And again, is that taking into account the kids that we're currently serving? Because I'm realizing that in the last 2 years a lot of what we expected or certain milestones that were hit typically by children are not exactly in the same place. So I was wondering if that was something that was taken into account. Also, if there's room, again, the flexibility for age ranges.

One last thing was I hear the different components being brought up as in the parents. I love the fact that administrators, paraeducators, all these are mentioned, but I wonder if there's a clear role that they serve within this curriculum, and is it more than just, I see more of a communication aspect, which is telling parents or telling administrators, but I'm wondering if there's collaboration happening in regards to the roles. I'm going to use a simple example. I, as a teacher, have control and can support within my classroom and I have opportunities to communicate with parents, but I don't have the opportunities to collaborate. And I know that we have, in many programs, support staff, whether it be administrative staff, whether it be site supervisors. Are they fully immersed in this curriculum so that they can support between the school and parents and more, again, as a collaborative learning versus just communication?

**Erika St. Andre:**

Yeah. Great questions. Karin, I just want to make sure, do I have time to respond or should I just gather questions and then provide responses after the fact?

**Karin Bloomer:**

Yeah, Erica, I think if you can provide any immediate feedback, it's wonderful, and then obviously a more thorough follow-up would be lovely. But if there's a few things you're able to respond to now.

**Erika St. Andre:**

Yeah. So to your first question, we really did focus in this grant on the fact that the early childhood grade span is birth through age 5, and that really allowed us to encompass those youngest students or children who are first in a child care setting at maybe even earlier than 2 years old, all the way up through kiddos who are entering elementary school. And many of the strategies that were taught to teachers are appropriate for kids across that age span. So for example, repeated reading of a favorite text for different purposes and what's called dialogic reading, where, again, reading a favorite book, but with different questions and different discussion structured for each of those.

On the family and community engagement. I do appreciate your question and it was something that our grantees brought to us, that we don't want to just be giving information in a one-way vein. And so all of our grantees, and particularly in priority one, it became very much a teaching and learning alongside parents with these events. So parents were given books to take home, along with strategies for ways to read the books with their kids, ways to talk about the books, ways to engage in literacy that don't involve books, for example, walking around the community and noticing signs or things along those lines. And so there was a tremendous amount of focus on not just communicating at parents, but engaging with parents in developing literacy-rich home environments to mirror what the students were experiencing in daycare or in preschool. Thank you so much for those questions.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Okay. I see two more hands in the few minutes. We have Ms. Pat, or Patricia, please go ahead. Oh, you're still muted, Ms. Pat. Can you unmute? Okay, here we go.

**Patricia Alexander:**

Hi, I'm a family child care provider, so yes, I have questions, because a lot of things get geared around to the elementary schools, especially T-K now, that, as providers, are losing kids. So we have the infants and the toddlers. My group is 2 to 5. I'm fortunate right now this year I do have still some 4-year-olds. So these kinds of programs are always of great interest to me personally and to other providers, but we don't always get allowed in or we're not invited into these programs or told about them, or by the time we are told about them, the grant's gone. So how can we communicate or let the communication come to us so we can get into this too?



Because some of the things, the programs like T-K, they want you to join this network and you have to do all this stuff and I have all the qualifications, it's just the networks aren't around here. But I provide a curriculum now. I'm always looking for ways to enhance it, especially involving parents, and literacy is a big one. So how's that going to affect us and come to us, is my big concern with this?

**Erika St. Andre:**

I'm so glad you asked that, Ms. Pat. It's almost like your question was planted because this was kind of precisely what we're hoping to get at. And with this new round of funding that we are about to release the competition for, we are going to require, it came as kind of a wonderful surprise in the 2019 grant that the San Bernardino County folks had the ability to and the desire to partner with family child care. And because it was so effective, we are now going to require that for the grantee in this new round of funding.

Now, that competition hasn't opened yet, and so we don't yet know which counties will be involved in that work across the state. But the idea overall is to expand this work statewide eventually. So what we are doing is building the capacity for counties to engage in this work, whether they have the grant funds or not. And so I think the hope in the coming years is that local family child care providers could communicate with their County Office of Education to find those resources and supports.

**Patricia Alexander:**

Thank you.

**Erika St. Andre:**

Thank you.

**Karin Bloomer:**

And we'll take Deborah's hand and Erika's response before we move on to our last agenda item. Thanks, Deborah.

**Deborah Corley-Marzett:**

Thank you so much for that. Thank you, Pat, for raising that because you were right on point, my sister. That was my concern and my thought. And with that, I'm just going to simply say, Erica, you had mentioned at the end just now upcoming years to find resources and support. Upcoming years is too far out. What about now?

It's difficult to find out something after the fact and then to be told, "In the near future, per se, you will be included." That's difficult. I found it uncomfortable to hear, as you were presenting, about how it's from birth to 12th grade, but yet I didn't hear anything about family daycare providers until the very, very end. Because I thought to myself, no doubt as Pat did, birth, most of that's family daycare providers. Why wouldn't we even be thought of to be in partnership with?

So I'm asking, Erika, if and where that family daycare providers are a part of this partnership and the voice at this table so that we are definitely included and not excluded. And I would love to know when you said the upcoming years, how far out?

Are we talking about right now? Because these type of resources are needed now because family daycare providers, there's a lot who have preschool settings that would love to have this support. And thank you again for this information.

**Erika St. Andre:**

I appreciate your question so much. So in the here and now, our strongest resource for supports for family childcare providers is our grantees at the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools. And I am available to put you in touch with the leaders of that project. And like I said, they worked in partnership with folks in Fresno County and Orange County who had very similar work happening. So that's for the here and now. And my contact information is on the final slide, so I will provide that to you.

And then in terms of moving forward, are going to be running the grant competition beginning possibly literally today, but any day now, and then naming the grantees by December 1st. So at the beginning of 2026, this work will be restarting with a new grantee. And as I said, we hope and expect that more than three counties across California will be engaged in this work in the new grant period, and that, by extension, we could provide these services to many, many more family child care providers.

**Deborah Corley-Marzett:**

Okay. I'll give a contact to you because I'm very interested in seeing how providers will be included by the counties with that, because that, again, would be very interesting. And birth to 12th grade, family daycare providers without a doubt should be included. Thank you for that, Erika.

**Erika St. Andre:**

Absolutely.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Erika, thank you so much for joining us today and for that information. And we will now turn to public comment and keep the chat feature open for 5 minutes for public comments about that most recent agenda item. As we move on to our final agenda item, the update on rate reform, Jackie Barocio is back now in our room here in the meeting to share an update.

## 4. Update on Rate Reform

- Status Update

**Jackie Barocio:**

Can we bring the slides up, Karin? Awesome. Thanks, Karin. So we will provide a very quick update of rate reform following the Budget Act and then also the recent tentative agreement but also flagging for folks that we still are working on rescheduling the final rate and quality advisory panel where we will have a deeper discussion on rate reform.

So just at a high level, on July 3rd, 2025, the Department of Social Services complied with the federal requirement for states conducting the alternative methodology to submit the following items, which we also covered in prior rate and quality advisory panel meetings. Those items included the required detailed cost estimation model report, which typically is posted on our website within 30 days of federal approval, the rate sheet that is included in the state plan that reflects payment amounts in currently in effect and how do they compare as a percentage to the alternative methodology cost of care outputs, and then lastly, a timeline for implementation of rates under a single rate structure that will be informed by alternative methodology. And we'll be reviewing the implementation timeline when we get to the final agenda item today.

So in early July, the department also submitted its most recent rate reform quarterly update that is due to the legislature, and that is posted online. And before moving on to the next slide, I also wanted to take this opportunity to just further clarify this nuance between setting rates informed by the alternative methodology versus setting rates under a single rate structure. So rates today, as I just conveyed from that federal requirement perspective, are informed by the alternative methodology, in that the initial alternative methodology has been completed and we've used it to assess the adequacy of current rates as compared to those cost of care outputs, and then that assessment was submitted to the Administration of Children and Families, as required in early July.

However, we do understand that state reimbursement rates still continue to be based on the regional market rate and the standard reimbursement rate. Those rates, however, at some point will be set under a single rate structure. And under that single rate structure, it will be a unified rate structure that takes the place of our current two rate structures. So with that clarification, we can move on to the next slide, Karin.

So this slide just provides an overview of recent rate reform-related items that were included in the '25/'26 budget. Specifically, the '25/'26 budget maintains funding for current rate levels that, again, are still based off of the existing regional market rate and standard reimbursement rate base rates, but in addition to that, there is around \$61 million of redirected cost of living adjustment dollars to then provide a cost of living adjustment to the cost of care plus monthly payment amounts. We also have a set aside of funds of \$21.8 million of one-time federal funds to support any necessary department and local automation updates that are related to rate reform. Next slide.

The state budget also adopted and includes trailer bill language outlining the following goals and journal components of a single rate structure. Those include reimbursing all children and state preschool programs under a unified structure that takes into account a common set of rate elements. Establishing rates informed by cost associated with meeting health and safety requirements and program requirements. Administering per child base rates. Allowing programs to claim reimbursement for services delivered consistent with enhanced rates, if any. And establishing rates that vary by geography, type of child care setting, regulatory requirements applicable to each type of care setting, time categories, and age of a child. Next slide.

In terms of then the continued work around defining the single rate structure and policies associated with it, in prior rate and quality advisory meetings, a couple of key topics were identified that may require further engagement with focus groups or meeting with program partners. And those include discussing a proration of a potential weekly

rate as a replacement of the hourly and daily rates. We've discussed in previous meetings how the federal government, we received feedback that hourly and daily rates should be replaced with something that reflects more of the private market, such as weekly. Also, identifying any necessary reconciliation between the state preschool program and Title V reimbursement differences and how we can reach alignment under a single rate structure. Further conversations around how a child's age is defined for reimbursement purposes, equity evaluations of rates under the single rate structure, and then lastly, local provider and contractor automation impacts. The purpose again for these focus groups would really be to provide us, the administration, as well as the state partners, feedback in regards to these topics that pertain to the implementation of the single rate structure. Next slide.

A couple of other key next steps include both departments continuing to make progress on assessing the automation and other implementation readiness activities associated with the single rate structure. Also, a tentative agreement was reached on August 8th, and that included a continued joint labor management committee between the state and Child Care Providers United to develop recommendations for a single reimbursement rate structure no later than November 30th, 2025. Additionally, by September 1st, 2025, the department will submit amendments to the child care and development fund state plan to the federal government. Those amendments will update responses specifically to Section 4 of the state plan related to the alternative methodology process, which at the time of the state plan's initial submission had not been completed yet. And then lastly, in October, 2025, the next rate reform quarterly update report to the legislature will be published. Next slide. That ends my very high-level updates, and I'm happy to pass it back to Karin.

- **Council Questions**

**Karin Bloomer:**

Thanks, Jackie. Yeah, I understand that we'll take council questions at this point, and so looking for raised hands. Deborah, I see your hand. Please go ahead.

**Deborah Corley-Marzett:**

Thank you. Thank you for that information, Jackie. I have a question when you talked about the focus groups. When you mentioned the focus group, I'm sure there's providers that's in this meeting right now who are just clearing their throats and raising their hands," I want to get in on this focus group." How do I get in on this focus group? Where do providers go to find out?

**Jackie Barocio:**

Yeah, Deborah-

**Deborah Corley-Marzett:**

Thank you

**Jackie Barocio:**

Yeah. We can follow up, and I know we are definitely going to leverage those prior focus groups that we leaned on for the rate and quality advisory panel, for example, and replug into those. And we can follow up with additional information as well.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Thanks. And here in the physical meeting room, Tonia McMillan.

**Tonia McMillan:**

Yeah. Hi, Jackie. You had mentioned something about, and I didn't get it in my notes, equity-based-

**Jackie Barocio:**

Evaluation?

**Tonia McMillan:**

Yeah. How does that work? What is that? Can you talk about that a little bit?

**Jackie Barocio:**

Yeah, we've discussed, and I think this was also previously identified in a prior JLMC, that as a part of the single rate structure, once it's implemented and in effect, needing to do an equity-based evaluation on an ongoing basis to really assess the impacts that it's having on programs, families from that reimbursement perspective. So just flagging that that is an ongoing milestone that we are tracking as a part of the broader single rate structure roadmap.

**Tonia McMillan:**

Thank you.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Okay. Next hand I see is Robin Layton's.

**Robin Layton:**

Hi, everybody. Thank you for this update. I also just want to do a thank you. I'm not only on this council, I'm also a panel member on the rate and reform group, and I represent here center-based programs. I just want to thank you because as frustrating as the year had been, I believe that you did take our comments and our frustrations and it was heard and passed in the budget, and especially in regards to continuing hold harmless while we were waiting for this whole rate structure change to happen. I just want to acknowledge that that hasn't come up and I think it's really important for people to know that people in the departments are not only listening, they're hearing and they're passing it on. We were to have a panel meeting in, I believe it was August that has been postponed and I was wondering if we could get an update on that.

And also, just to also remind people when we're talking about the agreements with the CCPU, that does not include center-based programs, and so just a reminder to continue to work with us as well through, especially Every Child California. And if we can get an update on what the commitments that you would like from the panel members for the

next year, and hopefully with notice that we would know about meetings for the year. Thank you.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Thanks.

**Jackie Barocio:**

Yeah, Robin, we'll follow up in the RQAP and making that note to the rescheduling date, providing proper notice so folks can rearrange schedules as needed, and sharing those next steps on panel involvement or member involvement.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Thanks, Robin. Okay, Natali.

**Natali Gaxiola:**

Yes, I work for a CSPP program and I was happy to hear the evaluation of looking again to the age group definitions, again because we're dealing with a wide range. I was just wondering if that was something that was being... How far you're looking into that in regards to the adult-to-child ratio. Because we are seeing that because of that age range, there is a higher need in regards to providing quality care for the amount of children. I was wondering if you had any information you could share on that.

**Jackie Barocio:**

No information on that specifically, but the age feedback that was received during the RQAP, I think a lot of folks flagged. While the alternative methodology from a cost perspective may be based off of licensing rules because that is a cost driver, do we use those same definitions when determining reimbursement rate age definitions? Meaning, how do we define a school-aged child for a school-age reimbursement rate? I think folks wanted to create a space to further discuss that. But Natalie, if there's specifically something about ratios that you want to elevate, please send it over so that we have that in consideration as well as we're thinking about single rate structure policies.

**Natali Gaxiola:**

Thank you.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Deborah. I see your hand. Again, please.

**Deborah Corley-Marzett:**

Yes, thank you again. Just if you can, Jackie, elaborate on when you say proration of weekly rates as a replacement for hourly or daily rates, can you explain that for me please, and providers here?

**Jackie Barocio:**

Yeah, happy to. In prior RQAP meetings, we flagged that under the single rate structure that time categories may collapse into a weekly rate. But a lot of folks were saying, "Well, how do you then prorate it up or down to then maybe mimic what we currently have, which is hourly, daily, monthly?" So having further conversations on that piece of

as we're streamlining and consolidating, especially based off of ACF feedback that hourly and daily rates should not be happening, how do we still maintain that scaling of reimbursements?

**Deborah Corley-Marzett:**

That's fine. Thank you for that.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Any other questions or comments from council or committee members?

**Mary Ignatius:**

I have a question.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Tonia.

**Mary Ignatius:**

I just put my hand down. Could I go real quick, Tonia?

**Tonia McMillian:**

Yeah, go. Go, Mary.

**Mary Ignatius:**

Okay. Sort of two questions. One is because the current rate is so low, we're hearing from families just up and down the state who are now being really impacted by the unaffordability of weekly copayments, because the subsidy rate is so low and the providers have to be able to charge more to keep their doors open. How do you see copayments decreasing as rates are increasing? And second, I think you had to provide some information to the administration for children and families as the lead agency. Will you make that public so we can hear how you are explaining this to the feds as well?

**Jackie Barocio:**

Yeah, so on that piece, the cost estimation model, similar to the regional market rate surveys in the past, those are typically published within 30 days of federal approval. We have not received formal approval yet, just because we want to ensure that we incorporate any necessary technical edits that may come out of it. But we are working on posting it as soon as we can once we meet that milestone, and we will for sure send out the link when it's available. The implementation plan very much mirrors what we shared in those prior RQAP meetings and flagging the need for those implementation readiness activities, like automation updates, policy updates, creation of guidance, those needing to be in place before a single rate structure can take effect. But all those will be posted pending additional federal feedback once finalized.

**Mary Ignatius:**

Great. And then the copayment question, how do you see rate increases decreasing copayment?

**Jackie Barocio:**

Yeah, Mary, I'm going to get back to you on that one, but if you can type that in the chat, so then I at least can copy and paste it over and am able to get back to the group.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Great. Okay, so then, Tonia.

**Tonia McMillian:**

Yeah, just to go back to Deborah's question about the daily, hourly being replaced with weekly, that makes me nervous because there was a time when this same move was put in place without any... Any, nothing, input. And the math wasn't math. And so how do we make sure that this is equitable, that it's fair, and that input is being shared and broadened I mean, how do we make sure that that is going to happen?

**Jackie Barocio:**

Yeah. Yeah. So that's where we hope to create those topic-specific spaces. Tonia, I'm hearing you're raising your hand and it's like, "Let me know."

**Tonia McMillian:**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Jackie Barocio:**

Okay. Okay. But I appreciate the feedback and that's something that we also need to consider too when looking at a proration under a new structure.

**Tonia McMillian:**

Thank you, Jackie.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Okay. Deborah, I want to take your hand and then just acknowledge after this we should turn to public comments, so that members of the public who'd like to give verbal public comment as well as written comment in the chat can do so. So Deborah.

**Deborah Corley-Marzett:**

Thank you once again. I appreciate it. And I really do appreciate having a platform to speak. This is really important for providers, as well as all the families that we serve. So I'm going to grow on what my sister Tanya was just referring to. What's important here is that if there's a change, such as with this proration from hourly or whatever the case may be, that no matter what the change is, that providers are not going to be reimbursed anything less than what they're receiving now. That's important. So whatever changes you're going to make, make, but make sure that providers are not receiving anything less than what they're receiving now. That's important. It's about increasing our payments, our rates, our reimbursements, not finding ways to decrease it. That's important. Thank you.



## 5. General Public Comment

### **Karin Bloomer:**

Thank you, Deborah. I just want to turn to Claire Ramsey acknowledging we'll move to public comment. Is that-

### **Claire Ramsey:**

Yes, thank you, and just want to thank everyone for their comments both during Erika's presentation and during our rate reform presentation. And thank you to Jackie for that. And thank you again, Erika, for joining us and providing that information about the grant opportunity. And with that, I will turn it to Karin so we can open public comment. We did have a question in the chat. We will be taking both verbal public comment at this time, as well as continuing to have the chat open. So I'll turn it to Karin. Thank you all for your participation today.

### **Karin Bloomer:**

Thank you. We are opening up the chat feature at this time and we'll keep it open until we adjourn the meeting. If you'd like to give verbal public comment, please use your raised hand feature so that we can get you into the virtual queue to speak, and we'll take your comments in order by hand. We ask that speakers keep their comments to two minutes or less so that we can accommodate as many speakers as possible. I will let you know when you have about 30 seconds left and when your two minutes is up so you can be tracking your time. And please understand that public comments are statements submitted for the public record. Council members are asked not to respond to questions or comments at this time. And with that, we're going to look to the first hand in the queue, and I see Marcella Graves. Please go ahead and unmute on your end.

### **Marcella Graves:**

Hi. Good morning everyone. My name is Marcella out of Fresno, California. I want to say, yes, a rate increase, no decrease. And then also, the 21-day payment, sometimes when the 1st lies on a Saturday or Sunday or holiday on a Monday, we get our payments further out, like 23 days or 24, sometimes 25 days. So that system isn't working at all. When they changed it, I was even appalled about it because I did the math and we're getting paid further out. We used to get our checks on the 21st. Once in a while you might get on the 22nd, but it was on the 21st.

And then let's say if a parent forget to put a time in or whatnot, or forget the date or whatnot, we don't find out until later after you're getting paid. Two days later you get something in the mail saying that you didn't get paid, you have to refix the timesheet. Then you turn the timesheet back in again, you have to wait another 21 days of delay of payment. And it's just not acceptable to us providers when we're trying to make ends' meet and trying to pay our employees and keep the business going. I appreciate if you guys look at that system and fix it immediately. Thank you, and have a nice day.

### **Karin Bloomer:**

Thank you. Okay, Kari Roberts, we're unmuting you on our end. Please unmute and go ahead.

**Kari Roberts:**

Thank you very much. I did leave a couple of comments but I ran out of space, so I'm just going to read my response. I stopped with a parent going to get child care set from a CalWORKs entity and was told that she can't apply for help with child care while the state is paying her to take care of her own child and she's on family medical leave for having a baby. I find this to be disrespectful. It takes six weeks on average to get approved through a provider in my county and she needs to be back to work in four weeks. The message she got is she has to wait until her family medical leave is up before she can even apply. I'm hoping that can be looked at as well.

I also wanted to add that centers don't take subsidy reimbursement because of the large amount of time and work it requires to get paid. We're not allowed to charge different tuition, but it takes hours more time to track payments, submit attendance sheets, track certificates expiring, and help parents through the process of having their care extended through recertification. We have our parents contacting subsidy, not subsidy contacting parents when it's recert time. We also have to contact them when our payments are short and find out why. Versus a private pay parent, I just set their tuition payment up online and it happens in the background. It takes two staff members at my center.

**Karin Bloomer:**

30 seconds.

**Kari Roberts:**

I have approximately 75% of my families on subsidy, so it would be nice. I know CCTR providers are allowed monies for proctoring the program. If that would be something that happened, I bet you more providers would take subsidy. And lastly, I just want to let you know I had to keep retyping into the comments. It would be easier if this was left open during your guys' conversations. That way our comments are going with what's going on in the meeting. And lastly, I just want to say I hope there's going to be a toddler option age group because we don't have kids that are ready to go into our preschool at two years old right now. There's a lot of delays. And we are having parents who have to pay the co-payment but their children are not ready for that age rate. Thank you very much.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Thank you. Manju Kumari, we're unmuting you on our end. Please unmute and go ahead.

**Manju Kumari:**

Hi, this is Manju from Santa Clara County. I have many things to say, but the most important things, like whatever the information, you give it to first session, it's going to be pretty helpful for us as a childcare provider and parents making a small video. And then you just put in all important information and anybody looking, the childcare or anybody looking, parents are looking or providers are looking for subsidy children, make the small video. There is all most important information like phone number for agency for that, like that social service, LPA, and all those things. That to be very, very helpful to watch just a small video and then understand little bit better than nothing. Thank you.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Thank you so much. Crystal Jones, we're unmuting you on our end. Please unmute and go ahead.

**Crystal Jones:**

Crystal Jones here, childcare provider, a parent and advocate, and a stakeholder now, really here to uplift the concern of not only myself but the parents and the children that I take care of. I have wrote, I have knocked on doors, I have tapped into every person in alignment and code of conduct to help me with the situation of lack of care, lack of communication, lack of intentional partnerships that were promised but never received. The inconsistency of the system that have destroyed not only my livelihood but my children's confidence, their competence, and business services is unacceptable. I've been here since day one. I've been here to form the union that has now scaled systems, created budgets for providers, and now myself is homeless without my business in two locations that I had when I came to the table beginning of the pandemic.

It was the county leaders that destroyed my entity. It was the ones that are looking at me now in the face that's at this policy council that heard my cry and seeing me successful and seeing my whole business destroyed by the leader's input and the lack of care. It's not okay. I have parents steadily calling me for services and I can't even provide the services that I had that was fully high quality and fully successful. My own kids now are not the same. And now I'm bleeding from health issues, from toxic stress, and not getting the response and the care I need to continue the services I once had. It's not okay. The calls act to be nosy, but not to really help and to send you off to the next individual, but not really give resources and help, it's unacceptable. Who cares for the providers for real and the parents? Yes, we have the budgets, but what about the real organizations that are caring for the children and really providing high quality services?

For parents to trust you and want you., but you can't serve them, it's a detrimental situation to where it's out of my control. I did everything I was supposed to, and to see the lack of care and not be in services and now struggling to even feed my own kids because they want me on CalWORKs in the county, and I had a \$13,000 a month income is ridiculous. Like Natalie said, where is the transparency? I was even a student in her El Camino classroom and teacher lounge. It's not okay. You guys have seen me scale. You have seen me climb the ladder and even make it happen when you laughed in my face licensing and said I couldn't have my license. Lupe released my license and forced them to release my license for the center. It's not okay. I am crying. I am detrimental. I'm living house to house when I had our own house to live in, and your public council director eliminated me on purpose, full capacity.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Thank you, ma'am.

**Crystal Jones:**

The malice intent on saying it's community development and it's not, it's whatever development you making for a budget, but not for serving the people that are really

vulnerable and at risk in the front lines is not okay. These committees making plans but not really providing the resources that we need to scale and really expand like we asked to, and we're sitting at the table, it's not okay. I heard Andrea say there's no more budget. Where is the budget when we had it? Where is the allocations for the providers that were sitting there waiting to be served to expand and renovate that never received the help? Because we had the funds.

**Karin Bloomer:**

I'm so sorry, but we are going to have to move on to the next speaker. Thank you for your comments. Next, Manoja Weerakoon, we're unmuting you on our end. Please go ahead and unmute and go ahead.

**Manoja Weerakoon:**

Hello. Thank you for letting me talk. Yes, I have a question. Now, I agree with all the providers who talk before me. Crystal Jones, I feel her, we are having the same problem. But my problem is we have two rules, for private pay and the state paid kids. Now, the parents, all of a sudden they ghost on us, they don't come, and they don't even give the two weeks' notice. We are a small center, so it's a big dent on our budget income, so we expect that income to come, and all of a sudden the parents are gone and we don't get the payment. So how can we educate these parents? How can we do that? Because somebody has to pay us.

Other parents, they give us two weeks' notice. They follow all of our policies. These parents, I'm not blaming them, they may be going through some hardships, but the end result is we suffer. We lose kids. We give that spot to these kids. We have limited care spots. Then right now, of course, we have many, many spots and we don't have kids because of TK. But when we did, this is the problem, how can we educate the parents? How can you help us?

**Karin Bloomer:**

Thank you so much for your comments. Okay, it looks like our last speaker from the audience is Anita Thurman. Anita, we're going to unmute you on our end. Please unmute and go ahead.

**Anita Thurman:**

Hello, everyone. Can you hear me?

**Karin Bloomer:**

Yes, we can.

**Anita Thurman:**

Wonderful. Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to be here and voice our concerns. My concern is on the topic of copayments. As you all know, we as childcare providers, family childcare providers, we are independent contractors who opt to sign up with the subsidy programs because we want to help our community. That is the goal. We could opt to only accept private pay clients, but we don't do that because we are here for the community. So, 90% of my clients are subsidy recipients and they were first

with CCRC. They transferred to the FCCHEN program. And so my concern and my question is, it against CDSS policy for providers to request copayment from our parents? Our certificates are stage one, stage two, stage three, all of our childcare certificates clearly states that the provider rate exceeds their regional market rate, and a copayment exists payable by the parent directly to the provider.

So when I go to implement this step, I hear from FCCHEN program that it is against CDSS policy for us to receive copayment. The certificate says one thing, I implement that, and then I'm stopped from implementing that. So we all want clarity. Are we allowed to request and collect a copayment from our subsidy families? Is it with certain programs? Is it with CCRC, is it not with FCCHEN? I'm confused, so please clarify. Thank you.

**Karin Bloomer:**

Thank you so much. Okay, looking that we've gotten through the raised hands, this concludes public comment and I will turn it back to Claire Ramsey.

**Claire Ramsey:**

Well, thank you all, everyone who participated both in verbally providing public comment and who put public comment into the chat. We appreciate hearing from all of you. We appreciate your participation throughout this early childhood policy council meeting. And with that, I want to thank again the public for their testimony, our council members and committee members for their participation and attendance at this meeting. Thank you for your comments and reflections, and remind you all that our fourth quarterly meeting of the year will take place on November 20th. And that will be our final ECPC meeting of 2025. So thank you all again, and this meeting is adjourned.

END OF TRANSCRIPT