



Early Childhood Policy Council Parent and Workforce Advisory Committees

Meeting Agenda, Attendance, and Summary

Thursday, October 17, 2024
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Agenda

- 1. Welcome and Introduction**
 - Welcome
 - Review of agenda
- 2. Listening session: What is on your minds as parent of young children and as early childhood education providers? What solutions could help?**
 - Discussion
 - Public comment
- 3. Adjourn**

Attendance:

Early Childhood Policy Council Members: Lupe Jaime-Mileham, Miren Algorri, Mary Ignatius, Tonia McMillian

Parent Advisory Committee Members: Mary Ignatius, Lissete Frausto, Deborah Corley-Marzett, Naima Facih, Patricia Lozano, Patrick MacFarlane, Yenni Rivera, Cheryl Schroeder

Workforce Advisory Committee: Tonia McMillian, Patricia Alexander, Miren Algorri, AnnLouise Bonnitto, Zoila Toma, Debra Ward

Summary Report:

Welcome and Review of Agenda:

Tonia McMillian and **Mary Ignatius**, Chairs of the Workforce Advisory Committee (WAC) and Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) respectively, thanked members of both

advisory committees, the Early Childhood Policy Council (ECPC), and the public for their attendance.

Ignatius shared that the day's meeting would consist of two listening sessions for members of the advisory committees to share their concerns as parents of young children and providers in the early childhood education (ECE) space, followed by a joint committee discussion to brainstorm potential solutions to the challenges. She noted that the advisory committees represent a variety of families experiences, including immigrant, Black, foster care, survivors of domestic violence (DV), and those with special needs.

The emerging themes will be presented to the Council at the November 19 ECPC meeting.

Listening sessions: What is on your minds as parents of young children and as ECE providers? What solutions could help?

The full text of the listening session is recorded on pages 4–26 of the [WAC/PAC October 17 meeting transcript](#).

Parent Advisory Committee (pages 4-9)

The themes that emerged from the PAC members' discussion included the following:

Accessibility and Affordability of Child Care

Parents face difficulties finding affordable child care due to bureaucratic obstacles in the subsidy system around eligibility and income guidelines, Trustline process delays, and the lack of a one-stop online verification system.

Possible solutions:

- Adjust income guidelines to state-specific needs and creating an integrated portal for easier navigation of child care services.
- Encourage providers to actively participate in committees and public forums to stay aligned with families' needs and be strong advocates.

Selected comments:

"I'm having to pay out of pocket for a family member to help me with [my child], which a big chunk of my paycheck is going to just child care. I did try to apply for the [Alternative Payment Program] program so that my family member can be a provider...they are telling me that because she is a great aunt ...[she] has to go through a different process that's going to take up to between eight weeks to six months."

"...we are not qualifying for [Head Start and Early Head Start] because we make too much money when they're not taking into consideration what's coming in from our pre-checks."

“When parents give up after hitting obstacles in in the application or verification process: “...children are missing out on access to early learning that they are entitled to. And I think that’s really deeply disheartening and we need to make it as simple and easy as possible.”

“... having a better system [a verification portal to store the documents required during application processes for Medi-Cal, CAPP, etc.] ... making it easier to navigate the system.”

Advocacy and Policy Influence

To reflect on-the-ground realities, parents’ and providers’ voices need to be heard and prioritized in ECE policy decisions.

Possible solution:

- Encourage community civic engagement, voting, and participation in town hall meetings, especially meetings of groups whose work involves supporting and providing services to families and children.

Select comment:

“...my job is to...be close to the ground and really translate what parents need and make it happen at the policy level.”

Foster Care and Resource Family Support

There is a dearth of foster care resource families and quality support from the child care community for newborns through teenagers in the foster care system.

Possible solution:

- Current child care providers could consider their capacity to be foster parents.

Select comment:

“There is a preference to place [children and youth] with relatives. That doesn't negate the fact that we still need families desperately on short-term basis...and it's not just the teenagers, but children come in straight from the hospital and [of that group the] highest population are those zero to five-year-olds.”

Meeting Rate Reform Deadline:

Providers continue to serve families and children amidst current financial challenges and future uncertainty and expressed concerns about the state meeting the July 1, 2025, implementation date for true cost of care.

Possible solution:

- Proactively finalize and implement rate reform based on the alternative methodology.

Select comments:

“Providers are falling short and teetering on poverty. And providers cannot hold back their concerns about rate reform, because it's their lives.”

“...we fall under the category of ‘pink collar’ jobs but along with that ‘pink collar’ title is sexism, is workers being underpaid, workers not being recognized, majority women, there’s a problem.”

Inclusion in Universal Prekindergarten:

Family child care home (FCCH) providers face exclusion from a pathway to Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) programs, creating uncertainty and potential financial instability. Providers also remain unclear on the mechanics of FCCH education networks (FCCHENs).

Possible solutions:

- Increase communication from the California Department of Education (CDE) clarifying the details of the requirements and barriers to FCC integration into UPK.

Ensure communication includes conversations with affected parties, including FCCH providers, community-based private child care centers and publicly subsidized state preschool programs, and general child care contractors.

Select comment:

“Providers and parents want to know exactly how CDE plans to use providers in the UPK program. How will a parent, whose child is eligible for UPK program ... be connected to a [FCCHEN] provider who's a part of that (UPK) program? And how will CDE make sure a parent's choice is not violated when a parent wants to choose [a FCCHEN] provider for the UPK for their child over all the different options that are there?...Also, if the school district has an overflow of eligible UPK children, will the school district contact the parent with the list of [FCCHEN] providers in the UPK program?”

Impacts of Transitional Kindergarten:

Children moving out of FCCH settings into free district- and center-based transitional kindergarten (TK) programs, including free after-school programs, is hurting FCCH programs. Families are going to enroll where it is free because they do not have the income to cover full-price fees or the gap between providers’ fees and what subsidies pay. Families are choosing between child care and food and gas. Additionally, with so many FCCHs losing children to TK programs, FCCHs are being encouraged to care for more infants and toddlers, but the age requirements pose a major challenge.

Possible solutions:

- Ensure FCCH programs are included and marketed in the list of programs offered for families to choose from.

- Improve the rates, closer to true costs, so families do not have to choose free versus what they truly want for their children.
- Have the state change the definition of infant to be children under 18 months so more infant and toddler spaces can be opened up.

Select comments:

“And for the parents, they have the free [TK] programs...but they have the free after-school programs and that's what's killing us because I'm not even getting these little guys after school anymore. ...and even for providers who might have all the qualifications to be a TK teacher, I have those qualifications, but they're going to fill up the classrooms first and those places first, even a center-based TK program, and I'd be on the bottom of the list before I'd ever get called for sending any kids over to me through the school district.”

“... parents [are] having a hard time finding providers who will take the subsidies, not because they have the subsidy but because the providers charge so much more than what the subsidies pay. And then they want the parents to pay that gap...They can't always do it...This is where child care is falling short and they're saying there's not enough space for kids in child care. There is. Parents can't afford to pay that gap.”

Support for Special Needs and Early Intervention:

Parents require better access to services for children with special needs, and the system needs to assist in the early detection of disabilities without redundant verification processes. Reimbursement criteria can affect providers' desire to take on children with special needs.

Possible solutions:

- Promote parent education on the value of sharing observations of their children's [behaviors] with providers and educators to collaboratively identify potential signs of disabilities.
- Address criteria and barriers around reimbursements for personnel and supports for providers who are willing to accept children with special needs.

Select comments:

“We want children that are coming from low-income families, especially if you have children with special needs, to have access to good quality child care. And...the priority for enrollment...Providers should receive free training to be able to work with special needs children.”

“Some parents do not want to admit that their children are suffering from a disability that keeps them from functioning. But if parents and providers can really work together, then we can get children what we need.”

“The [state] agency...says, ‘we can only reimburse you [for an] additional fee [for a child who has an IEP] if you hire an additional person [to] show us that you need to hire or need additional help for this child.’ How can I hire an additional person when I'm being paid pennies?...I want the child to be here with me. I want to help and support that parent, but why aren't I entitled to receive that additional fee for having a child with an IEP, proving here's your paperwork and behavior issues...”

“I do not want to say no with a child with disabilities, but sometimes I have to. If the child requires one-on-one, I have to be honest with the parent because the safety of their child is at risk, and I am not going to put that child at risk. I have to say no because I don't have the support...How can you tell that to a parent, right? That's kind of discrimination...”

Workforce Advisory Committee (pages 9–15)

The themes that emerged from the WAC members' discussion included the following:

Licensing Efficiency:

Parents' efforts to secure care and providers' ability to serve children in a timely manner are hindered by delays in licensing inspections and regulatory requirements.

Possible solution:

- Address latency in licensing processes timelines.

Select comment:

While providers wait to be added to Trustline: “...We have parents that need to have child care immediately. They'll lose a job. Maybe they're losing the opportunity to go back to school. So these are some of the things that I see both on administrating a program...Are we going to lose slots? Are we going to get [a] reduction in funding?... In the Tribal communities, because we have to all compete for two percent of the entire amount of funding that goes out to all the states...if we have 240 kids, for example, from a Tribe that are eligible, we could only serve maybe ten because of the funding formula...”

Professional Development and Workforce Retention:

ECE providers face challenges retaining qualified staff due to low wages and unaffordable training and professional development, which impact the educational environment.

Possible solutions:

- Create financial stability for the sector.
- Address racial wage gaps.

- Consider incentives for ongoing education and professional growth to promote ECE professionals' longevity and continuity of child care.

Select comments:

“Balancing the cost of maintaining the facilities, providing materials and resources, and offering competitive wages for staff while keeping tuition affordable for families, it has been a struggle for many of us.”

“We really need to move into this new alternative methodology and be paid for the true cost of the services that we're rendering because we see that our workforce is dwindling, and that young people are not enticed to become educators— as much as they love working with children. [Providers] cannot provide for ourselves, and we cannot provide for our children if we are not paid the true cost of [care].”

Compensation & Recompense:

Inadequate compensation for providers' services is leading to financial hardship and negative impacts on the physical and mental health of the workforce and the feasibility of offering quality care. Racial wage gaps persist, and fewer ECE professionals are entering the field.

Possible solution:

- Implement true cost of care and services to mitigate and rectify harm on providers from low wages.

Select comment:

“...It's women of color, single mothers of color the ones that are affected the most by this inequitable payment system that forces us, the workforce, to subsidize the subsidy system.”

Integration and Inclusion in Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK):

Concerns and solutions shared echoed the contributions made by PAC members (see above).

Select comment:

“We have family educators that are losing...their programs because we are not included [in UPK]...we cannot wait until last minute to figure it out what is our pathway, what we need to do. We need educators to be ready to what are the next steps to follow.”

Programmatic Options for Families and Children:

FCCHs are losing due to a perception that they are babysitters rather than educators who possess full knowledge and experience in ECE. There are gaps in service for children of formerly incarcerated parent populations.

Possible solution:

- Recognize and acknowledge FCCH providers who offer a variety of services to meet diverse families' needs.

Select comments:

On the importance of FCCH providers and their role in advancing the field (for example, awareness of dual language learners, learning differences, etc.):

"[FCCH] exists because of the need of working families. This, it was the support that we provided to working families decades ago, but now, we are here, and we're left behind when changes are happening. Whatever change is happening is because we brought the voice to it. We need to give the parents the option, the children the option to have programs that they can learn and develop."

"Our formerly incarcerated parents...don't have more supports for them when it comes to child care. Going through the whole reunification process, and now, having to jump through hoops with their child care."

Public Comment and Chat:

The themes that emerged from public comment and chat included the following:

Emergency Funding and Systemic Support:

The effects of the pandemic are still at play for providers and their ability to keep their facilities operational.

Possible solutions:

- Provide emergency funds to prevent closures and maintain operations.
- Utilize unspent funds from child care program expansions or contract allocations to stabilize the early education sector.

Select comment:

"Many organizations like Choices for Children and 4C's are completely tapped out in funds and no longer providing assistance for low-income families."

Licensing and Regulatory Efficiency:

Providers encounter delays in facility licensing processes and stringent inspection requirements (such as fire sprinkler regulations), which impede their ability to open facilities in a timely manner and cause waitlists for families.

Possible solution:

- Increase resources and staffing for Community Care Licensing to streamline and speed-up inspection processes and reduce barriers to opening or modifying child care facilities.

Select comment:

“EES [a child care program] submitted an application to [Community Care Licensing] back in Spring 2024 for a new site to serve 60 children 2-5yrs. Back in July we were told there were 15 new applications, and it’s first comes first serve. It is October 17, and they have not conducted their initial visit!”

Advocacy for Policy Change:

There is a need for parent and educator advocacy efforts to address systemic challenges and policies that support families’ care needs and providers’ ability to serve families and young children.

Possible solution:

- Form advocacy groups to engage with legislators and influence policy changes that support a more equitable and responsive ECE system and provider access to FCCHENs.

Select comment:

“I’m in a FCCHEN waitlist for the past 12 years. According to Palmdale Child Care Resource Center they only have two mentors in the FCCHEN, so they cannot get more providers due to the low staff. Parents call me every day, but I cannot accept them because I’m not a FCCHEN provider.”

Workforce Development and Educator Preparedness:

There is high turnover among ECE educators, and the training new providers have received is often inadequate to prepare them for the realities of working in child care settings.

Possible solution:

- Revise and enhance ECE training curricula to include more content that showcases the realities of working in the ECE field so future educators are prepared and equipped to meet the demands of the job.

Select comments:

“The delay/lack of appropriate rate for high quality programs is impacting recruiting and retaining professional staff. The digital impact...is impacting the staffing pool with the virtual courses not being the same as in person, and the children coming into programs are addicted to devices.”

“Serving younger children due to TK and behaviors with safety concerns are issues that impact retaining staff.”

“Lab schools must ensure that practicum students are receiving real life experiences. And students must be held accountable for learning and preparing to implement what’s learned in the classroom. There is a disconnect between what’s learned in the college classrooms and the real-life implementation.”

Wages, Costs of Child Care, and Special Considerations:

State-subsidized providers are overwhelmed by work, reporting, and financial loads, compounded by accommodating children with special needs without additional compensation.

Possible solutions:

- Institute contractual stipulations including annual raises.
- Compensate providers for services rendered if the provider has verifiable documentation that a child with special needs is under their care.

Select comments:

“Yearly increases should be added and specified in the [state-subsidized provider] contracts to cover the cost of living and the quality care already provided. All staff (teachers, office staff, clearing staff, cooking staff, etc.) and providers deserve a living wage; that way, we are not struggling daily and paycheck to paycheck. Put all yearly rate increases specified in the contract assignment to staff and providers, not for the agency's discretion...”

“We should be able to claim children with disabilities who do not have an individualized education plan (IEP) or individualized family service plan (IFSP). We have many children with disabilities without IEP or IFSP who have doctor documentation and therapy documents to verify the disability. The staff provides the care and adjusts to help and empower the child's learning, but we need to get reimbursed because they need an IEP/ IFSP.”

“The needs for special needs assessment have increased (doubled or tripled) since 2022. It takes forever for parents to get the forms in before we can move forward. Then, [we] wait forever to get someone to come out to observe/assess the children.”

“UPK does not embrace any program...Being a community-based private [center] or publicly subsidized [State Preschool Program or General Child Care] does not mean that community-based centers are a part of ‘UPK.’ All of the funding is going to TK, and nothing I know of allows centers to operate a ‘TK’ program, nor have I heard of districts subcontracting to allow any program to serve TK eligible children. I think the key difference and one that we need to lift up is community-based (small business) mixed delivery vs district [local education agency] programs where there are no avenues for community-based to participate in UPK.”

“Reductions in the child population and the roll out of UPK has provided school districts and CSPPs with unfair dominance in the field with the least educated staff.”

Racial Wage Equity:

Black ECE providers face racial wage disparities, which should be eliminated and will not be addressed by rate reform alone.

Possible solution:

- Implement wage policies that address and rectify racial wage disparities, ensuring equitable compensation across the workforce.

Select comment:

“I am an infant toddler teacher with a master in ECE in Trauma, plus I am a fellow at the [University of Massachusetts] Chan Medical School in Early Relational Health, and I am ashamed of our systems here in the USA. I worked in ECE for 15 years in Europe, families all get support, no matter what your income is, race, etc. There needs to be a campaign or a model like the military has a well-oiled ECE program. For parents to have to hand their infant to me and then go work for a minimum salary is criminal.”

Recognition and Inclusion Family Child Care:

Family child care providers feel undervalued and overlooked in their endeavors to provide quality care, maintain enrollment and be included in UPK.

Possible solution:

- Defining language in ECE frameworks to specifically include FCCH providers in a pathway to UPK programs with or without a FCCHEN.

Select comment:

“UPK does seem to be threatening [care] for home-based providers. The only way to possibly participate in the "instructional minutes" that we can see is if they can be part of a FCCHEN. But there isn't enough accessibility to that program. And wrap-around care isn't enough to financially sustain a lot of programs. This greatly threatens to REDUCE the spaces available for infant and toddlers. This is a real challenge the state may need to face. It's also a challenging hit to home-based providers, especially FCCHs that, at great risk to their own health and safety, kept our state working during the pandemic.”

Statewide Age Requirements and Parent Choice

Age groupings result in a toddler population languishing in an infant category, sometimes without care services or delayed access to services.

Possible solution:

- Establish congruency in ratios between FCCHs and center-based settings for infants by advocating for state legislation that creates a category for infants and defines the space where they will be served.

Select comments:

“You can't find space for your ‘toddler’ because she's considered an ‘infant.’ If children 18–24 [months] were considered to be in the same age grouping as 2-year-olds, just like the ratio age groups in centers, parents could more easily access FCCH spaces.”

“The definition of UPK, that starting at ‘preschool’ 3-year-olds and now 2-year-olds is child care, is a big part of the problem. California is moving in a direction that is supporting, encouraging, and funding ALL children to be served at a school district—obliterating parent choice and impacting all programs that serve children across a continuum of care starting at BIRTH. I would focus advocacy on parent choice and the fact that every family needs access to child care that meets their geographic, scheduling, cultural, language, and economic needs; the child care provider workforce is highly valued and financially thriving; and all types of child care settings support children’s healthy development.”

Adjourn

Chairs Ignatius and McMillian thanked the public, advisory committee members, and presenters.

Meeting adjourned.