



# Early Childhood Policy Council Parent and Workforce Advisory Committees

## Meeting Agenda, Attendance, and Summary

Wednesday, October 22, 2025

10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

### Agenda

#### 1. Introduction

- Welcome
- Review of agenda

#### 2. Ensuring an Equity-Centered Quality Rating and Improvement System in California

- Presentation
- Committee discussion

#### 3. Impacts of the Federal Government Shutdown on Children and Families

- Presentation
- Committee discussion

#### 4. General Public Comment

#### 5. Adjourn

### Attendance:

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

**Workforce Advisory Committee:** Debra Ward, Tonia McMillian, Zoila Toma

**Early Childhood Policy Council Members:** Andrea Fernandez, Dean Tagawa, Janet Zamudio, Mary Ann Hansen

**Guest Speakers:** Rachel Wilensky (The Center for Law and Social Policy - CLASP)

## Summary Report:

### Welcome and Introduction

**Mary Ignatius**, Chair of the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), outlined the main topics of the agenda for the day:

- A presentation from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) on their work to improve the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). Ignatius emphasized that CDSS was actively seeking feedback from the committees about equity priorities and definitions.
- A briefing from the Center on Law and Social Policy (CLASP) regarding potential impacts of the federal government shutdown on children and families in California.

### Ensuring an Equity-Centered Quality Rating and Improvement System in California

The full presentation slides and remarks of the discussion are available:

- [Slides](#)
- [WAC/PAC October 22 transcript](#), pages 4-18

**Nadirah Jones** of [CDSS](#) welcomed participants and outlined the purpose of the Equity-Centered Quality Rating and Improvement System (EC-QRIS) advisory panel meeting, highlighting the state's commitment to addressing inequities in the QRIS system. Jones noted that the EC-QRIS work had previously been paused to focus on issues of workforce compensation, specifically the reimbursement rates for subsidized child care. More Information about the state's efforts to move to a single rate structure for child care reimbursement is available at the [rate and quality website](#). With rate reform work progressing, the CDSS launched the EC-QRIS advisory panel to redesign QRIS with an equity focus—making QRIS useful to families and beneficial to providers across all settings.

### Desired Outcomes

The EC-QRIS advisory panel's vision is for a new QRIS that

- is created in collaboration with providers and families
- makes sense and is useful to families making early learning and care choices
- is accessible and beneficial for all providers
- works to reduce racial inequities for providers, children, and families

- sets standards to ensure providers value children's language, identity, and culture and help children build life and school readiness skills in supportive environments

### Panel Process and Equity Indicators

The EC-QRIS advisory panel is using a set of equity priorities and indicators to guide their work. Each monthly meeting focuses on two indicators, with final recommendations expected by December 2025.

At the September 25, 2025, EC-QRIS meeting, the panel discussed:

- Equity Indicator 7: Workforce Conditions, Preparation, and Development
- Equity Indicator 8: Communications, Outreach, and Systems Alignment

The meeting concluded with encouragement for continued feedback and engagement, noting that panel recommendations would guide further phases of the work and do not mark the end of the QRIS revision process. All materials are available via [CDSS's website](#) and listservs.

## **Committee Discussion**

The full text of the discussion is recorded on pages 6-18 of the [WAC/PAC October 22 meeting transcript](#). The themes that emerged from the committee comments and chat included the following:

### Inclusion of Family Child Care Providers

WAC members expressed concern that family child care providers are often excluded from conversations about the early education workforce and career pathways. There is a call for better integration and recognition of these providers, with adequate pathways to participate and contribute within the broader system. Questions were raised about what is needed to ensure providers have equitable access to resources, training, and funding for services.

### Family and Child Needs as the Central Focus

During the discussion, it was also emphasized that systems should be designed to center the diverse needs and priorities of families and children. Parents need the option of small, individualized, home-like settings, if that is what serves the learning style and developmental needs of their children. This can be particularly important for children with special needs or those who are experiencing homelessness.

### Existing and Potential Burdens on Educators

Committee members acknowledged that early educators often take on financial burdens and sacrifice personal well-being to support families. They expressed concern that implementing QRIS ratings when compensation issues are still unresolved could create

additional burdens. It was suggested that QRIS ratings be paused until the rates are in place and educators have had time to hire staff, buy materials, and make other improvements.

### Funding Limitations and Policies

Concerns were raised about budget constraints and the need for intentional funding mechanisms that support all types of early childhood programs. A committee member suggested that funding should follow the child, regardless of program type, to ensure resources reach where they are most needed.

### Collaboration and Partnership to Improve Equity

Several commenters discussed the importance of teamwork and open communication between staff and families. Committee members discussed problems caused by siloed systems and perceived competition across different care settings. They shared observations about inequitable access to care and other systemic concerns that resulting in disparities among communities. They highlighted that partnerships and collaboration, rather than competition, across program types are crucial for supporting children and families holistically. It was suggested that the culture within the system must shift to prioritize collaboration, respect providers, and shared goals focused on helping children thrive. They also urged for stronger partnerships with external agencies such as food pantries, social services, and early intervention programs.

## **Impacts of the Federal Government Shutdown on Children and Families**

The full presentation slides and remarks of the discussion are available:

- [Slides](#)
- [WAC/PAC October 22 transcript](#), pages 19-26

**Rachel Wilensky** of the [Center for Law and Social Policy \(CLASP\)](#) addressed the significant and evolving challenges posed by the federal government shutdown.

The government shutdown, which ended November 12, resulted from Congress's failure to pass either a full-year budget or a temporary funding measure known as a "continuing resolution" by the end of the fiscal year. While continuing resolutions are common to keep government running, at the time of the WAC/PAC meeting, negotiations had stalled. As a result, federal operations had slowed and many non-essential employees had been furloughed.

### State-Level Variation and Recommendations

**Wilensky** emphasized that while some programs like the Child Care and Development Block Grant remained stable, disruptions to programs such as Head Start, SNAP, WIC,

and TANF would increasingly affect children, families, and providers—especially those relying on multiple federal supports. She noted that child care subsidy payments remained intact, but broader program disruption was possible if the shutdown continued. Wilensky specifically pointed out that that individual Head Start programs have different grant renewal dates, which could lead to some programs being impacted while others are not. She offered the following recommendations for interest holders:

- Monitor grant renewal dates for Head Start.
- Stay informed about state-level policy decisions on TANF and WIC reserves.
- Anticipate possible delays in SNAP processing if federal agencies remain understaffed.

## **Committee Discussion**

### Need for Timely Information from State Agencies

Committee members emphasized the importance of receiving clear and prompt updates from state departments regarding expectations and changes affecting California families and early educators.

### Monitoring Funding and Capacity Impacts

Discussion included how federal and state funding uncertainties were impacting programs and the need for ongoing tracking of issues. Efforts have been taken by California State agencies, such as the California Department of Education and California Department of Social Services, to better understand potential losses in service capacity and the broader impact on providers and families across the state.

### Financial Strategies and Reserve Funds

Questions arose about possible “stopgap” measures such as self-funding, the use of reserve funds, and “maintenance of effort” reserves to potentially delay impacts on programs and services.

### Emotional and Community Impacts on Families and Providers

Committee members recognized the stress families, children, and providers might have been feeling due to the shutdown. There was a call to acknowledge and honor the commitment to supporting communities during these challenging times. Committee members stressed that early educators and program staff act as trusted messengers to families. Staying informed and honestly answering questions is considered vital to help families navigate uncertainty, especially regarding federal programs like SNAP, WIC, and TANF. The committee expressed gratitude for the community of educators and advocates fighting for young children and families.

### Vulnerability of Early Education in Funding Decisions

A committee member highlighted the early education programs are often subject to funding cuts in budget negotiations. There was concern about maintaining preparedness and advocating for the needs of educators and children.

### Broader Social and Educational Challenges

Committee members also reflected on broader trends in education system such as removal of books, closure of museums, and dismantling of access to authentic history. They highlighted that early educators have a role in ensuring children have access to quality education and accurate information.

## **General Public Comment**

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

### Systemic Barriers and Inequities

#### Select Comment:

"What I have seen in center-based, I thought was a center-based issue with the racism and bias that I've witnessed happen to Black children, African ancestry children and families, as well as brown, Latina, Latinx, Hispanic families. And I chose to open a family child care program with the intent of supporting this population as well as children with individual needs. Center-based programs do not like to work with children with individual needs. I thought that that was a center-based issue. The issue that we're talking about is far greater than racism. It's far greater than discrimination. There's an obvious caste system that's happening right now. It's happened from the beginning of time. And when I say, 'What are you going to do as an individual and who are you?' is speaking to, what are you going to do to make sure that these systems do not take over our entire population? What's happening right now has been happening, and the call is what are you going to do as an individual?"

### Provider Challenges and Frustrations

#### Select Comment:

"Us providers do a lot. Every time we come to these meetings, we're told, well, we need to change how we need to change it. And then it's under the guise of for the family, for the children, but us providers, we suffer a lot. We don't even have the income to run our business. And now, and it feels like our business is not even our business. It's a sister company for the government...We're tired of talking you guys. We need a solution that's going to help us to grow our businesses. Y'all want us to sit here and put our lives and our health and our families on the line for other people, but nobody's hearing us, nobody's hearing us. We're having the same arguments fighting the same fights that we've been fighting, and I cannot be the only one feeling like this. It's very overwhelming. When I look at my business that I brought up from the ground and feel like that

the government and all these other programs are running it, running my business, literally.”

### Impact of Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and Center-based Programs

#### Select Comment:

"I just wanted to point out the TK programs in the public schools are killing our programs here. I'm barely holding on the string. I know that child care providers also have things to do, and they're also as qualified as a preschool center. But like I said, it's just depending on the child, the parents' needs of their child and whatever works best for them, especially the scheduling and whatnot. I have to deal with paying a really high rent lease. And then I also have to pay all these different insurances just to keep up with my teachers. I have teachers that are doing their best to be here. I have to pay for substitute teachers now. The minimum cost to hire a substitute teacher, I had to pay \$32 an hour to hire a substitute teacher. And the centers are struggling too. The TK programs are taking the children, and we are a small center. We're not corporate. They're small centers. There's corporate and small centers. There's a big difference between us and the corporate. And just don't forget about the small child care centers. I just have 35 children I haven't been able to fill up in the past two years."

### Fair Compensation, Recognition, and Qualifications

#### Select Comment:

"A lot of us providers have university degrees, who have been licensed, who get our license and keep studying and keep on going to workshops to keep ourselves updated. A concern for me is licensing, giving licenses for people who only have what is required, which is the CPR class, just minimum education. And also another concern is like I've mentioned, a lot of us have a lot of education, and centers is employing employees with only six units. So that's a very strong worrying for me and a lot of questions is, why?"

### Authentic Choice and Parent Needs

#### Select Comment:

"As a family child care provider of over 10 years with a teaching credential and a BA degree and other things, until a child can attend FCC for 'free,' just like TK, only then will a family actually be prioritized. A family's authentic choice for their children will then be prioritized. And following that vein, quality is a relative term, especially when you're talking about children and parents and cultural preferences. Staff, in order to provide all of that for children, as is what have been said, they need to have their own needs met—pay, satisfaction, recognition—before they can effectively center the needs and priorities of family.

"You have to take care of yourself before the other people on the plane. The whole oxygen mask concept that we've heard for many years. As far as reaching parents and parents finding child care providers, I find many, many child care providers do not know how to use MyChildCarePlan. They don't know what it is.

So that goes on both sides. More parents need to be informed about how to use MyChildCarePlan. More providers need to be informed that they need to go fill it out. They need to help do that for themselves so that parents can then call them.”

### Collaboration, Community, and Support

#### Select Comment:

"I just wanted to thank you guys for the job you do because I could just feel everyone's heart...I think that we need to be here and support each other if we have questions or we need laws, you know what I mean? Questions, we have a union for providers, just throwing it out there. And also, we do have a law firm so they can stand up for providers or different private, but I'm here just saying thank you for the job you're doing because it's not easy even on our part and we're trying to hang in there. And for the families, we have resources. We should have a resource on our bulletin board for families, what they can do and even direct them."

### Lack of Progress and Need for State Action

#### Select Comment:

"I do really believe California has a bigger role to play. We've been having a lot of conversations about the rate and quality panel, the workforce, and it seems like we're met with a lot of roadblocks and frustration and lack of funding, honestly, to be put towards it. And it's nobody's fault, but so this conversation is disheartening, but also the lack of progress and the child care provider union, all of the providers, all of everyone on this call that has been talking about this rate forever, we've had four years. They said they had us do two studies. I mean, it's crazy. And so I think just taking some self-reflection that California and the leaders of California really have some work to do, including maybe some of the groups on this call to really make a change in that way because it hasn't happened so far."

## **Adjourn**

**Chair McMillian** thanked the public, advisory committee members, and presenters.

Meeting adjourned.